

C E C I L I A,

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M E M O I R S

O F A N

H E I R E S S.

B Y

THE AUTHOR OF EVELINA.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

V O L. IV.

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G E C I L I A.

B O O K VII.

C H A P T E R I.

A L E T T E R.

AS soon as Mrs Charlton was acquainted with the departure of young Delvile she returned to Cecilia, impatient to be informed what had passed. The narration she heard both hurt and astonished her; that Cecilia, the heiress of such a fortune, the possessor of so much beauty, descended of a worthy family, and formed and educated to grace a noble one, should be rejected by people to whom her wealth would be most useful, and only in secret have their alliance proposed to her, she deemed an indignity that called for nothing but resentment, and approved and enforced the resolution of her young friend to resist all solicitations which Mr and Mrs Delvile did not second themselves.

About two hours after Delvile was gone, his letter arrived. Cecilia opened it with trepidation, and read as follows :

To Miss BEVERLEY.

September 20, 1779.

What could be the apprehensions, the suspicions of Miss Beverley when so earnestly she prohibited my writing? From a temper so unguarded as mine, could she fear any subtlety of doctrine? Is my character so little known to her, that she can think me capable of craft or duplicity? Had I even the desire, I have neither the address nor the patience to practise them; no, loveliest Miss Beverley, though sometimes by vehemence I may inadvertently offend, by sophistry, believe me, I never shall injure: my ambition, as I have told you, is to convince, not beguile, and my arguments shall be simple as my professions shall be sincere.

Yet how again may I venture to mention a proposal which so lately almost before you had heard you rejected? Suffer me, however, to assure you it resulted neither from insensibility to your delicacy, nor to my own duty; I made it, on the contrary, with that reluctance and timidity which were given me by an apprehension that both seemed to be offended by it:—but alas! already I have said what with grief I must repeat, I have no resource, no alternative,

ternative, between receiving the honour of your hand in secret or foregoing you forever.

You will wonder, you may well wonder at such a declaration ; and again that severe renunciation with which you wounded me, will tremble on your lips.—Oh there let it stop ! nor let the air again be agitated with sounds so discordant.

In that cruel and heart-breaking moment when I tore myself from you at Delvile-Castle, I confessed to you the reason of my flight, and I determined to see you no more. I named not to you, then, my family, the potency of my own objections against daring to solicit your favour, rendering theirs immaterial : my own are now wholly removed,—but their's remain in full force.

My father, descended of a race which though decaying in wealth, is unsubdued in pride, considers himself as the guardian of the honour of his house, to which he holds the name of his ancestors inseparably annexed : my mother, born of the same family, and bred to the same ideas, has strengthened this opinion by giving it the sanction of her own.

Such being their sentiments, you will not, madam, be surprised that their only son, the sole inheritor of their fortune, and sole object of their expectations, should early have admitted the same. Indeed almost the first lesson I was taught was that of reverencing the family from which I am descended, and the

name to which I am born. I was bid consider myself as its only remaining support, and sedulously instructed neither to act nor think but with a view to its aggrandizement and dignity.

Thus, unchecked by ourselves, and uncontrolled by the world, this haughty self-importance acquired by time a strength, and by mutual encouragement a firmness, which Miss Beverley alone could possibly, I believe, have shaken! What therefore, was my secret alarm, when first I was conscious of the force of her attractions, and found my mind wholly occupied with admiration of her excellencies! All that pride could demand, and all to which ambition could aspire, all that happiness could covet, or the most scrupulous delicacy exact, in her I found united; and while my heart was enslaved by her charms, my understanding exulted in its fetters.— Yet to forfeit my name, to give up for ever a family which upon me rested its latest expectations,— Honour, I thought forbade it, propriety and manly spirit revolted at the sacrifice. The renunciation of my birthright seemed a desertion of the post in which I was stationed : I forbore, therefore, even in my wishes, to solicit your favour, and vigorously determined to fly you as dangerous to my peace, because unattainable without dishonour.

Such was the intended regulation of my conduct at the time I received Biddulph's letter :

ter : in three days I was to leave England ; my father, with much persuasion, had consented to my departure ; my mother, who penetrated into my motives, had never opposed it : but how great was the change wrought upon my mind by reading that letter ! my steadiness forsook me, my resolution wavered ; yet I thought him deceived, and attributed his suspicions to jealousy : but still, Fidelle I knew was missing—and to hear he was your darling companion—was it possible to quit England in a state of such uncertainty ? to be harrassed in distant climates with conjectures I might then never satisfy ? No ; I told my friends I must visit Biddulph before I left the kingdom, and promising to return to them in three or four days, I hastily set out for Suffolk, and rested not till I arrived at Mrs Charlton's.

What a scene there awaited me ! to behold the loved mistress of my heart, the opposed, yet resistless object of my fondest admiration, caressing an animal she knew to be mine, mourning over him his master's ill health, and sweetly recommending to him fidelity.— Ah ! forgive the retrospection, I will dwell on it no longer. Little, indeed, had I imagined with what softness the dignity of Miss Beverley was blended, though always conscious that her virtues, her attractions, and her excellencies, would reflect lustre upon the highest station to which human grandeur could

raise her, and would still be more exalted than her rank, though that were the most eminent upon earth.—And had there been a thousand, and ten thousand obstacles to oppose my addressing her, vigorously and undauntedly would I have combated with them all, in preference to yielding to this single objection.

Let not the frankness of this declaration irritate you, but rather let it serve to convince you of the sincerity of what follows: various as are the calamities of life which may render me miserable, YOU only, among even its chosen felicities, have power to make me happy. Fame, honours, wealth, ambition, were insufficient without you; all chance of internal peace, and every softer hope is now centered in your favour, and to lose you, from whatever cause, ensures me wretchedness unmitigated.

With respect therefore to myself, the die is finally cast, and the conflict between bosom felicity and family pride is deliberately over. This name which so vainly I have cherished and so painfully supported, I now find inadequate to recompense me from the sacrifice which its preservation requires. I part with it, I own, with regret that the surrender is necessary; yet it is rather an imaginary than an actual evil, and though a deep wound to pride, no offence to morality.

Thus

Thus have I laid open to you my whole heart, confessed my perplexities, acknowledged my vain-glory, and exposed with equal sincerity the sources of my doubts, and the motives of my decision : but now, indeed, how to proceed I know not ; the difficulties which are yet to encounter I fear to enumerate, and the petition I have to urge I have scarce courage to mention.

My family, mistaking ambition for honour, and rank for dignity, have long planned a splendid connection for me, to which though my invariable repugnance has stopt any advances, their wishes and their views immovably adhere. I am but too certain they will now listen to no other. I dread, therefore, to make a trial where I despair of success ; I know not how to risk a prayer with those who may silence me by a command.

In a situation so desperate, what then remains ? Must I make an application with a certainty of rejection, and then mock all authority by acting in defiance of it ? Or, harder task yet ! relinquish my dearest hopes when no longer persuaded of their impropriety ? Ah ! sweetest Miss Beverley, end the struggle at once ! My happiness, my peace, are wholly in your power, for the moment of our union secures them for life.

It may seem to you strange that I should thus propose to brave the friends whom I venture not to entreat ; but from my knowledge

of their characters and sentiments I am certain I have no other resource. Their favourite principles were too early imbibed to be now at this late season eradicated. Slaves that we all are to habits, and dupes to appearances, jealous guardians of our pride, to which our comfort is sacrificed, and even our virtue made subservient, what conviction can be offered by reason, to notions that exist but by prejudice? They have been cherished too long for rhetoric to remove them, they can only be expelled by all-powerful necessity. Life is, indeed, too brief, and success too precarious, to trust, in any case where happiness is concerned the extirpation of deep-rooted and darling opinions, to the slow-working influence of argument and disquisition.

Yet bigotted as they are to rank and family, they adore Miss Beverley, and though their consent to the forfeiture of their name might for ever be denied, when once they beheld her the head and ornament of their house, her elegance and accomplishments joined to the splendour of her fortune, would speedily make them forget the plans which now wholly absorb them. Their sense of honour is in nothing inferior to their sense of high birth; your condescension, therefore, would be felt by them in its fullest force, and though, during their first surprize, they might be irritated against their son, they would make it the study of their lives, that the lady who for him had

had done so much, should never, through their means, repine for herself.

With regard to settlements, the privacy of our union would not affect them: one confident we must unavoidably trust, and I would deposite in the hands of whatever person you would name, a bond by which I would engage myself to settle both your fortune and my own, according to the arbitration of our mutual friends.

The time for secrecy, though painful, would be short, and even from the altar, if you desired it, I would hasten to Delvile-Castle. Not one of my friends should you see till they waited upon you themselves to solicit your presence at their house, till our residence elsewhere was fixed.

Oh, loveliest Cecilia, from a dream of a happiness so sweet awaken me not! from a plan of felicity so attractive turn not away! If one part of it is unpleasant, reject not therefore all; and since without some drawback no earthly bliss is attainable, do not, by a refinement too scrupulous for the short period of our existence, deny yourself that delight which your benevolence will afford you, in snatching from the pangs of unavailing regret and misery, the gratefulst of men in the

humblest and most devoted
of your servants,

Mortimer Delvile.

A 6

Cecilia

Cecilia read and re-read this letter, but with a perturbation of mind that made her little able to weigh its contents. Paragraph by paragraph her sentiments varied, and her determination was changed : the earnestness of his supplication now softened her into compliance, the acknowledged pride of his family now irritated her into resentment, and the confession of his own regret now fickened her into despondence. She meant in an immediate answer to have written a final dismission ; but though proof against his entreaties, because not convinced by his arguments, there was something in the conclusion of his letter that staggered her resolution.

Those scruples and that refinement against which he warned her; she herself thought might be overstrained, and to gratify unnecessary punctilio, the short period of existence be rendered causelessly unhappy. He had truly said that their union would be no offence to morality; and with respect merely to pride, why should that be spared ? He knew he possessed her heart, she had long been certain of his, her character had early gained the affection of his mother, and the essential service which an income such as hers must do the family, would soon be felt too powerfully to make her connection with it regretted.

These reflections were so pleasant she knew not how to discard them ; and the consciousness that her secret was betrayed not only to himself,

himself, but to Mr Biddulph, Lord Ernolf, Lady Honoria Pemberton, and Mrs Delvile, gave them additional force, by making it probable she was yet more widely suspected.

But still her delicacy and her principles revolted against a conduct of which the secrecy seemed to imply the impropriety. "How shall I meet Mrs Delvile," cried she, "after an action so clandestine? How, after praise such as she has bestowed upon me, bear the severity of her eye, when she thinks I have seduced from her the obedience of her son! A son who is the sole solace and first hope of her existence, whose virtues make all her happiness, and whose filial piety is her only glory!—And well may she glory in a son such as Delvile! Nobly has he exerted himself in situations the most difficult, his family and his ideas of honour he has preferred to his peace and health, he has fulfilled with spirit and integrity the various, the conflicting duties of life. Even now, perhaps, in his present application, he may merely think himself bound by knowing me no longer free, and his generous sensibility to the weakness he has discovered, without any of the conviction to which he pretends, may have occasioned this proposal!"

A suggestion so mortifying again changed her determination; and the tears of Henrietta Belfield, with the letter which she had surprised in her hand recurring to her memory, all
her

her thoughts turned once more upon rejecting him for ever.

In this fluctuating state of mind she found writing impracticable; while uncertain what to wish, to decide was impossible. She disdained coquetry, she was superior to trifling, the candour and openness of Delvile had merited all her sincerity, and therefore while any doubt remained with herself, she held it unworthy her character to tell him she had none.

Mrs Charlton, upon reading the letter, became again the advocate of Delvile; the frankness with which he had stated his difficulties, assured her of his probity, and by explaining his former conduct, satisfied her with the rectitude of his future intentions. "Do not, therefore, my dear child," cried she, "become the parent of your own misery, by refusing him; he deserves you alike from his principles and his affection, and the task would both be long and melancholy to disengage him from your heart. I see not, however, the least occasion for the disgrace of a private marriage; I know not any family to which you would not be an honour, and those who feel not your merit, are little worth pleasing. Let Mr Delvile, therefore, apply openly to his friends, and if they refuse their consent, be their prejudices their reward. You are freed from all obligations where caprice only can raise objections, and you may then,

then, in the face of the world, vindicate your choice."

The wishes of Cecilia accorded with this advice, though the general tenour of Delvile's letter gave her little reason to expect he would follow it.

C H A P. II.

A D I S C U S S I O N.

THE day past away, and Cecilia had yet written no answer; the evening came, and her resolution was still unfixed. Delvile, at length, was again announced; and though she dreaded trusting herself to his entreaties, the necessity of hastening some decision deterred her from refusing to see him.

Mrs Charlton was with her when he entered the room; he attempted at first some general conversation, though the anxiety of his mind was strongly pictured upon his face. Cecilia endeavoured also to talk upon common topics, though her evident embarrassment spoke the absence of her thoughts.

Delvile at length, unable any longer to bear suspense, turned to Mrs Charlton, and said,

said, " You are probably acquainted, madam, with the purport of the letter I had the honour of sending to Miss Beverley this morning?"

" Yes, Sir," answered the old lady, " and you need desire little more than that her opinion of it may be as favourable as mine."

Delvile bowed and thanked her; and looking at Cecilia, to whom he ventured not to speak, he perceived in her countenance a mixture of dejection and confusion, that told him whatever might be her opinion, it had by no means increased her happiness.

" But why, Sir," said Mrs Charlton, " should you be thus sure of the disapprobation of your friends? had you not better hear what they have to say?"

" I know, madam, what they have to say," returned he; " for their language and their principles have been invariable from my birth; to apply to them, therefore, for a concession which I am certain they will not grant, were only a cruel device to lay all my misery to their account."

" And if they are so perverse, they deserve from you nothing better," said Mrs Charlton; " speak to them, however; you will then have done your duty; and if they are obstinately unjust, you will have acquired a right to act for yourself."

" To mock their authority," answered Delvile, " would be more offensive than to oppose

oppose it: to solicit their approbation, and then act in defiance of it, might justly provoke their indignation.—No; if at last I am reduced to appeal to them, by their decision I must abide.”

To this Mrs Charlton could make no answer, and in a few minutes she left the room.

“ And is such, also,” said Delvile, “ the opinion of Miss Beverley? has she doomed me to be wretched, and does she wish that doom to be signed by my nearest friends!”

“ If your friends, Sir,” said Cecilia, “ are so undoubtedly inflexible, it were madness, upon any plan, to risk their displeasure.”

“ To entreaty,” he answered, “ they will be inflexible, but not to forgiveness. My father, though haughty, dearly, even passionately loves me; my mother, though high-spirited, is just, noble, and generous. She is, indeed, the most exalted of women, and her power over my mind I am unaccustomed to resist. Miss Beverley alone seems born to be her daughter—”

“ No, no,” interrupted Cecilia, “ as her daughter she rejects me!”

“ She loves, she adores you!” cried he, warmly; “ and were I not certain she feels your excellencies as they ought to be felt, my veneration for you *both* should even yet spare you my present supplication. But you would become, I am certain, the first blessing of

of her life; in you she would behold all the felicity of her son,—his restoration to health, to his country, to his friends!"

"O Sir," cried Cecilia, with emotion, "how deep a trench of real misery do you sink, in order to raise this pile of fancied happiness! But I will not be responsible for your offending such a mother; scarcely can you honour her yourself more than I do; and I here declare most solemnly—"

"O stop!" interrupted Delvile, "and resolve not till you have heard me. Would you, were she no more, were my father also no more, would you yet persist in refusing me?"

"Why should you ask me?" said Cecilia, blushing; "you would then be your own agent, and perhaps—"

She hesitated, and Delvile vehemently exclaimed, "Oh make me not a monster! force me not to desire the death of the very beings by whom I live! weaken not the bonds of affection by which they are endeared to me, and compel me not to wish them no more as the sole barriers to my happiness!"

"Heaven forbid!" cried Cecilia; "could I believe you so impious, I should suffer little indeed in desiring your eternal absence."

"Why then only upon their extinction must I rest my hope of your favour?"

Cecilia,

Cecilia, staggered and distressed by this question, could make no answer. Delvile, perceiving her embarrassment, redoubled his urgency ; and before she had power to recollect herself, she had almost consented to his plan, when Henrietta Belfield rushing in her memory, she hastily exclaimed, "One doubt there is, which I know not how to mention, but ought to have cleared up ;—you are acquainted with—you remember Miss Belfield?"

" Certainly ; but what of Miss Belfield that can raise a doubt in the mind of Miss Beverley?"

Cecilia coloured, and was silent.

" Is it possible," continued he, " you could ever for an instant suppose—but I cannot even name a supposition so foreign to all possibility."

" She is surely very amiable?"

" Yes," answered he, " she is innocent, gentle, and engaging; and I heartily wish she were in a better situation."

" Did you ever occasionally, or by any accident, correspond with her?"

" Never in my life."

" And were not your visits to the brother sometimes—

" Have a care," interrupted he, laughing, " lest I reverse the question, and ask if your visits to the sister were not sometimes for the brother! But what does this mean? Could

Miss

Miss Beverley imagine that *after* knowing her, the charms of Miss Belfield could put me in any danger?"

Cecilia, bound in delicacy and friendship not to betray the tender and trusting Henrietta, and internally satisfied of his innocence by his frankness, evaded any answer, and would now have done with the subject; but Delvile, eager wholly to exculpate himself, though by no means displeased at an enquiry which shewed so much interest in his affections, continued his explanation.

" Miss Belfield has, I grant, an attraction in the simplicity of her manners which charms by its singularity: her heart, too, seems all purity, and her temper all softness. I have not, you find, been blind to her merit; on the contrary, I have both admired and pitied her. But far indeed is she removed from all chance of rivalry in her heart! A character such as hers for a while is irresistibly alluring; but when its novelty is over, simplicity uninformed becomes wearisome, and softness without dignity is too indiscriminate to give delight. We sigh for entertainment, when cloyed by mere sweetness; and heavily drags on the load of life when the companion of our social hours wants spirit, intelligence, and cultivation. With Miss Beverley all these—"

" Talk not of all these," cried Cecilia, " when one single obstacle has power to render them valueless."

" But

" But now," cried he, " that obstacle is surmounted."

" Surmounted only for a moment! for even in your letter this morning you confess the regret with which it fills you."

" And why should I deceive you? why pretend to think with pleasure, or even with indifference, of an obstacle which has had thus long the power to make me miserable? But where is happiness without alloy? Is perfect bliss the condition of humanity? Oh if we refuse to taste it till in its last state of refinement, how shall the cup of evil be ever from our lips?"

" How indeed!" said Cecilia, with a sigh; " the regret, I believe, will remain eternally upon your mind, and she, perhaps, who should cause, might soon be taught to partake of it."

" O Miss Beverley! how have I merited this severity? did I make my proposals lightly? Did I suffer my eagerness to conquer my reason? Have I not, on the contrary, been steady and considerate; neither biased by passion nor betrayed by tenderness?"

" And yet in what," said Cecilia, " consists this boasted steadiness? I perceived it indeed, at Delvile Castle, but here—"

" The pride of heart which supported me there," cried he, " will support me no longer; what sustained my firmness, but your apparent severity? What enabled me to

to fly you, but your invariable coldness? The rigour with which I trampled upon my feelings I thought fortitude and spirit,—but I knew not then the pitying sympathy of Cecilia!"

"O that you knew it not yet!" cried she, blushing; "before the fatal accident, you thought of me, I believe, in a manner far more honourable."

"Impossible! differently, I thought of you, but never better, never so well as now. I then represented you all lovely in beauty, all perfect in goodness and virtue, but it was virtue in its highest majesty, not, as now, blended with the softest sensibility."

"Alas!" said Cecilia, "how the portrait is faded!"

"No, it is but more from the life: it is the sublimity of an angel, mingled with all that is attractive in woman. But who is the friend we may venture to trust? To whom may I give bond? And from whom may I receive a treasure which for the rest of my life will constitute all its felicity?"

"Where can *I*," cried Cecilia, "find a friend, who, in this critical moment, will instruct me how to act?"

"You will find one," answered he, "in your own bosom: ask but yourself this plain question: will any virtue be offended by your honouring me with your hand?"

"Yes; duty will be offended, since it is contrary to the will of your parents."

"But

" But is there no time for emancipation ? Am not I of an age to chuse for myself the partner of my life ? Will not you in a few days be the uncontrolled mistress of your actions ? Are we not both independent ? Your ample fortune all your own, and the estates of my father so entailed, they must unavoidably be mine ? "

" And are these," said Cecilia, " considerations to set us free from our duty ? "

" No, but they are circumstances to relieve us from slavery. Let me not offend you if I am still more explicit. When no law, human or divine, can be injured by our union, when one motive of pride is all that can be opposed to a thousand motives of convenience and happiness, why should we *both* be made unhappy, merely lest that pride should lose its gratification ? "

This question, which so often and so angrily she had revolved in her own mind, again silenced her ; and Delvile, with the eagerness of approaching success, redoubled his solicitations.

" Be mine," he cried, " sweetest Cecilia, and all will go well. To refer me to my friends is, effectually, to banish me for ever. Spare me, then, the unavailing task ; and save me from the resistless entreaties of a mother, whose every desire I have held sacred, whose wish has been my law, and whose commands I have implicitly,

implicitly, invariably obeyed! Oh, generously save me from the dreadful alternative of wounding her maternal heart by a peremptory refusal, or of torturing my own with pangs to which it is unequal by an extorted obedience!"

"Alas!" cried Cecilia, "how utterly impossible I can relieve you!"

"And why? once mine, irrevocably mine—"

"No, that would but irritate,—and irritate past hope of pardon."

"Indeed you are mistaken: to your merit they are far from insensible, and your fortune is just what they wish. Trust me, therefore, when I assure you that their displeasure, which both respect and justice will guard them from ever flinging *you*, will soon die wholly away. I speak not merely from my hopes; in judging my own friends, I consider human nature in general. Inevitable evils are ever best supported. It is suspense, it is hope that make the food of misery: certainty is always endured, because known to be past amendment, and felt to give defiance to struggling."

"And can you," cried Cecilia, "with reasoning so desperate be satisfied?"

"In a situation so extraordinary as ours," answered he, "there is no other. The voice of the world at large will be all in our favour. Our union neither injures our fortunes, nor taints our morality: with the character of each the

the other is satisfied, and both must be alike exculpated from mercenary views of interest, or romantic contempt of poverty; what right have we, then, to repine at an objection which, however potent, is single? Surely none. Oh if wholly unchecked were the happiness I now have in view, if no foul storm sometimes lowered over the prospect, and for a moment obscured its brightness, how could my heart find room for joy so superlative? The whole world might rise against me, as the first man in it who had nothing left to wish!"

Cecilia, whose own hopes aided this reasoning, found not much to oppose to it; and with little more of entreaty, and still less of argument, Delvile at length obtained her consent to his plan. Fearfully, indeed, and with unfeigned reluctance she gave it, but it was the only alternative with a separation for ever, to which she held not the necessity adequate to the pain.

The thanks of Delvile were as vehement as had been his entreaties, which yet, however, were not at an end; the concession she had made was imperfect, unless its performance were immediate, and he now endeavoured to prevail with her to be his before the expiration of a week.

Here, however, his task ceased to be difficult; Cecilia, as ingenuous by nature as she was honourable from principle, having once brought her mind to con-

sent to his proposal, sought not by studied difficulties to enhance the value of her compliance : the great point resolved upon, she held all else of too little importance for a contest.

Mrs Charlton was now called in, and acquainted with the result of their conference. Her approbation by no means followed the scheme of privacy; yet she was too much rejoiced in seeing her young friend near the period of her long suspence and uneasiness, to oppose any plan which might forward their termination.

Delvile then again begged to know what male confident might be entrusted with their project.

Mr Monckton immediately occurred to Cecilia, though the certainty of his ill-will to the cause made all application to him disagreeable : but his long and steady friendship for her, his readiness to counsel and assist her, and the promises she had occasionally made, not to act without his advice, all concurred to persuade her that in a matter of such importance, she owed to him her confidence, and should be culpable to proceed without it. Upon him, therefore, she fixed ; yet finding in herself a repugnance insuperable to acquainting him with her situation, she agreed that Delvile, who instantly proposed to be her messenger, should open to him the affair, and prepare him for their meeting.

Delvile

Delvile then, rapid in thought and fertile in expedients, with a celerity and vigour which bore down all objections, arranged the whole conduct of the business. To avoid suspicion, he determined instantly to quit her, and, as soon as he had executed his commission with Mr Monckton, to hasten to London, that the necessary preparations for their marriage might be made with dispatch and secrecy. He purposed, also, to find out Mr Belfield, that he might draw up the bond with which he meant to entrust Mr Monckton. This measure Cecilia would have opposed, but he refused to listen to her. Mrs Charlton herself, though her age and infirmities had long confined her to her own house, gratified Cecilia upon this critical occasion with consenting to accompany her to the altar. Mr Monckton was depended upon for giving her away, and a church in London was the place appointed for the performance of the ceremony. In three days the principal difficulties to the union would be removed by Cecilia's coming of age, and in five days it was agreed they should actually meet in town. The moment they were married, Delvile promised to set off for the Castle, while in another chaise, Cecilia returned to Mrs Charlton's.

This settled, he conjured her to be punctual, and earnestly recommending himself to her fidelity and affection, he bid her adieu.

C H A P. III.

A RETROSPECTION.

LEFT now to herself, sensations unfelt before filled the heart of Cecilia. All that had passed for a while appeared a dream; her ideas were indistinct, her memory was confused, her faculties seemed all out of order, and she had but an imperfect consciousness either of the transaction in which she had just been engaged, or of the promise she had bound herself to fulfil: even truth from imagination she scarcely could separate; all was darkness and doubt, inquietude and disorder!

But when at length her recollection more clearly returned, and her situation appeared to her such as it really was, divested alike of false terrors or delusive expectations, she found herself still farther removed from tranquillity.

Hitherto, though no stranger to sorrow, which the sickness and early loss of her friends had first taught her to feel, and which the subsequent anxiety of her own hearth had since instructed her to bear, she had yet invariably possessed the consolation of self-approving reflections: but the step she was now about to take, all her principles opposed; it terrified her as undutiful, it shocked her as clandestine, and

and scarce was Delvile out of sight, before she regretted her consent to it as the loss of her self-esteem; and believed, even if a reconciliation took place, the remembrance of a wilful fault would still follow her, blemish in her own eyes the character she had hoped to support, and be a constant alloy to her happiness, by telling her how unworthily she had obtained it.

Where frailty has never been voluntary, nor error stubborn, where the pride of early integrity is unsubdued, and the first purity of innocence is inviolate, how fearfully delicate, how “tremblingly alive” is the conscience of man! strange, that what in its first state is so tender, can in its last become so callous!

Compared with the general lot of human misery, Cecilia had suffered nothing; but compared with the exaltation of ideal happiness, she had suffered much; willingly, however, would she again have borne all that had distressed her, experienced the same painful suspense, endured the same melancholy parting, and gone through the same cruel task of combating inclination with reason, to have relieved her virtuous mind from the newborn and intolerable terror of conscientious reproaches.

The equity of her notions permitted her not from the earnestness of Delvile’s entreaties to draw any palliation for her consent to his proposal; she was conscious that but for her own

too great facility those entreaties would have been ineffectual, since she well knew how little from any other of her admirers they would have availed.

But chiefly her affliction and repentance hung upon Mrs Delvile, whom she loved, revered and honoured, whom she dreaded to offend, and whom she well knew expected from her even exemplary virtue. Her praises, her partiality, her confidence in her character, which hitherto had been her pride, she now only recollects with shame and with sadness. The terror of the first interview never ceased to be present to her; she shrank even in imagination from her wrath-darting eye, she felt stung by pointed satire, and subdued by cold contempt.

Yet to disappoint Delvile so late, by forfeiting a promise so positively accorded; to trifle with a man who to her had been uniformly candid, to waver when her word was engaged, and retract when he thought himself secure,—honour, justice and shame told her the time was now past.

“ And yet is not this,” cried she, “ placing nominal before actual evil? Is it not studying appearance at the expence of reality? If agreeing to wrong is criminal, is not performing it worse? If repentance for ill actions calls for mercy, has not repentance for ill intentions a yet higher claim?—And what reproaches from Delvile can be so bitter as my own?—

What

What separation, what sorrow, what possible calamity can hang upon my mind with such heaviness, as the sense of committing voluntary evil?"

This thought so much affected her, that, conquering all regret either for Delvile or herself, she resolved to write to him instantly, and acquaint him of the alteration in her sentiments.

This, however, after having so deeply engaged herself, was by no means easy; and many letters were begun, but not one of them was finished, when a sudden recollection obliged her to give over the attempt,—for she knew not whither to direct to him.

In the haste with which their plan had been formed and settled, it had never once occurred to them that any occasion for writing was likely to happen. Delvile, indeed, knew that her address would still be the same; and with regard to his own, as his journey to London was to be secret, he purposed not having any fixed habitation. On the day of their marriage, and not before, they had appointed to meet at the house of Mrs Roberts, in Fetter-lane, whence they were instantly to proceed to the church.

She might still, indeed, enclose a letter for him in one to Mrs Hill, to be delivered to him on the destined morning when he called to claim her; but to fail him at the last moment, when Mr Belfield would have drawn

up the bond, when a licence was procured, the clergyman waiting to perform the ceremony, and Delvile without a suspicion but that the next moment would unite them for ever, seemed extending prudence into treachery, and power into tyranny. Delvile had done nothing to merit such treatment, he had practised no deceit, he had been guilty of no perfidy, he had opened to her his whole heart, and after shewing it without any disguise, the option had been all her own to accept or refuse him.

A ray of joy now broke its way through the gloom of her apprehensions. "Ah!" cried she, "I have not, then, any means to recede! an unprovoked breach of promise, at the very moment destined for its performance, would but vary the mode of acting wrong, without approaching nearer to acting right!"

This idea for a while not merely calmed but delighted her; to be the wife of Delvile seemed now a matter of necessity, and she soothed herself with believing that to struggle against it were vain.

The next morning during breakfast Mr Monckton arrived.

Not greater, though winged with joy, had been the expedition of Delvile to open to him his plan, than was his own, though only goaded by desperation, to make some effort with Cecilia for rendering it abortive. Nor could all his self-denial, the command which he

he held over his passions, nor the rigour with which his feelings were made subservient to his interest, in this sudden hour of trial, avail to preserve his equanimity. The refinements of hypocrisy, and the arts of insinuation, offered advantages too distant, and exacted attentions too subtle, for a moment so alarming; those arts and those attentions he had already, for many years practised, with an address the most masterly, and a diligence the most indefatigable: success had of late seemed to follow his toils; the increasing infirmities of his wife, the disappointment and retirement of Cecilia, uniting to promise him a conclusion equally speedy and happy; when now, by a sudden and unexpected stroke, the sweet solace of his future cares, the long projected recompence of his past sufferings, was to be snatched from him for ever, and by one who, compared with himself, was but the acquaintance of a day.

Almost wholly off his guard from the surprise and horror of this apprehension, he entered the room with such an air of haste and perturbation, that Mrs Charlton and her grand-daughters demanded what was the matter:

"I am come," he answered abruptly, yet endeavouring to recollect himself, "to speak with Miss Beverley upon business of some importance."

" My dear, then," said Mrs Charlton, " you had better go with Mr Monckton into your dressing-room."

Cecilia, deeply blushing, arose and led the way: slowly, however, she proceeded, though urged by Mr Monckton, to make speed. Certain of his disapprobation, and but doubtfully relieved from her own, she dreaded a conference which on his side, she foresaw, would be all exhortation and reproof, and on hers all timidity and shame.

" Good God," cried he " Miss Beverley, what is this you have done? bound yourself to marry a man who despises, who scorns, who refuses to own you!"

Shocked by this opening, she started, but could make no answer.

" See you not," he continued, " the indignity which is offered you? Does the loose, the slimy veil with which it is covered, hide it from your understanding, or disguise it from your delicacy?"

" I thought not,—I meant not," said she, more and more confounded, " to submit to any indignity, though my pride, in an exigence so peculiar, may give way, for a while, to convenience."

" To convenience?" repeated he, " to contempt, to derision, to insolence!"—

" O Mr Monckton!" interrupted Cecilia, " make not use of such expressions! they are too cruel for me to hear, and if I thought they

they were just, would make me miserable for life!"

" You are deceived, grossly deceived," replied he, " if you doubt their truth for a moment : they are not, indeed, even decently concealed from you ; they are glaring as the day, and wilful blindness can alone obscure them."

" I am sorry, Sir," said Cecilia, whose confusion, at a charge so rough, began now to give way to anger, " if this is your opinion; and I am sorry, too, for the liberty I have taken in troubling you upon such a subject."

An apology so full of displeasure instantly taught Mr Monckton the error he was committing, and checking, therefore, the violence of those emotions to which his sudden and desperate disappointment gave rise, and which betrayed him into reproaches so unskilful, he endeavoured to recover his accustomed equanimity, and assuming an air of friendly openness, said, " Let me not offend you, my dear Miss Beverley, by a freedom which results merely from a solicitude to serve you, and which the length and intimacy of our acquaintance had, I hoped long since authorised. I know not how to see you on the brink of destruction without speaking, yet, if you are averse to my sincerity, I will curb it, and have done."

" No, do not have done," cried she, much softened; " your sincerity does me nothing.

but honour, and hitherto, I am sure, it has done me nothing but good. Perhaps I deserve your utmost censure ; I feared it, indeed, before you came, and ought, therefore, to have better prepared myself for meeting with it."

This speech completed Mr Monckton's self-victory ; it shewed him not only the impropriety of his turbulence, but gave him room to hope that a mildness more crafty would have better success.

" You cannot but be certain," he answered, " that my zeal proceeds wholly from a desire to be of use to you : my knowledge of the world might possibly, I thought, assist your inexperience, and the disinterestedness of my regard, might enable me to see and to point out the dangers to which you are exposed, from artifice and duplicity in those who have other purposes to answer than what simply belong to your welfare."

" Neither artifice nor duplicity," cried Cecilia, jealous for the honour of Delvile, " have been practised against me. Argument, and not persuasion, determined me, and if I have done wrong—those who prompted me have erred as unwittingly as myself."

" You are too generous to perceive the difference, or you would find nothing less alike. If, however, my plainness will not offend you, before it is quite too late, I will point out to you a few of the evils,—for there are some

some I cannot even mention, which at this instant do not merely threaten, but await you."

Cecilia started at this terrifying offer, and afraid to accept, yet ashamed to refuse it, hung back irresolute.

"I see," said Mr Monckton, after a pause of some continuance, "your determination admits no appeal. The consequence must indeed, be all your own, but I am greatly grieved to find how little you are aware of its seriousness. Hereafter you will wish, perhaps, that the friend of your earliest youth had been permitted to advise you; at present you only think him officious and impertinent, and therefore he can do nothing you will be so likely to approve as quitting you. I wish you, then, greater happiness than seems prepared to follow you, and a counsellor more prosperous in offering his assistance."

He would then have taken his leave: but Cecilia called out, "Oh, Mr Monckton! do you then give me up?"

"Not unless you wish it."

"Alas, I know not what to wish! except indeed, the restoration of that security from self-blame, which till yesterday, even in the midst of disappointment, quieted and consoled me."

"Are you, then, sensible you have gone wrong, yet resolute not to turn back?"

"Could I tell, could I see," cried she, with energy, "which way I ought to turn, not a moment

a moment would I hesitate how to act! my heart should have no power, my happiness no choice,—I would recover my own esteem by any sacrifice that could be made!"

"What, then, can possibly be your doubt? To be as you were yesterday what is wanting but your own inclination?"

"Every thing is wanting; right, honour, firmness, all by which the just are bound, and all which the conscientious hold sacred!"

"These scruples are merely romantic; your own good sense, had it fairer play, would contemn them; but it is warped at present by prejudice and prepossession."

"No, indeed!" cried she, colouring at the charge, "I may have entered too precipitately into an engagement I ought to have avoided, but it is weakness of judgment, not of heart, that disables me from retrieving my error."

"Yet you will neither hear whether it may lead you, nor which way you may escape from it?

"Yes, Sir," cried she, trembling, "I am now ready to hear both."

"Briefly, then, I will tell you. It will lead you into a family of which every individual will disdain you; it will make you inmate of a house of which no other inmate will associate with you; you will be insulted as an inferior, and reproached as an intruder; your birth will be a subject of ridicule, and your whole race only named with derision:

and

and while the elders of the proud castle treat you with open contempt, the man for whom you suffer will not dare to support you."

" Impossible! impossible!" cried Cecilia, with the most angry emotion, " this whole representation is exaggerated, and the latter part is utterly without foundation."

" The latter part," said Mr Monckton, " is of all other least disputable: the man who now dares not own, will then never venture to defend you. On the contrary, to make peace for himself, he will be the first to neglect you. The ruined estates of his ancestors will be repaired by your fortune, while the name which you carry into his family will be constantly resented as an injury: you will thus be plundered though you are scorned, and told to consider yourself honoured that they condescend to make use of you! nor here rests the evils of a forced connection with so much arrogance,—even your children, should you have any, will be educated to despise you!"

" Dreadful and horrible!" cried Cecilia; " I can hear no more.—Oh, Mr Monckton, what a prospect have you opened to my view!"

" Fly from it, then, while it is yet in your power,—when two paths are before you, choose not that which leads to destruction; send instantly after Delvile and tell him that you have recovered your senses."

" I would

"I would long since have sent,—I wanted not a representation such as this,—but I know not how to direct to him, nor whither he is gone."

"All art and baseness to prevent your recantation!"

"No, Sir, no," cried she with quickness; "whatever may be the truth of your painting in general, all that concerns—"

Ashamed of the vindication she intended, which yet in her own mind was firm and animated, she stopt and left the sentence unfinished.

"In what place were you to meet?" said Mr Monkton; "you can at least send to him there."

"We were only to have met," answered she, in much confusion, "at the last moment,—and that would be too late—it would be too—I could not, without some previous notice, break a promise which I gave without any restriction."

"Is this your only objection?"

"It is: but it is one which I cannot conquer."

"Then you would give up this ill-boding connection, but from notions of delicacy with regard to the time?"

"Indeed I meant it, before you came."

"I then, will obviate this objection: give me but the commission, either verbally or in writing,

writing, and I will undertake to find him out, and deliver it before night."

Cecilia, little expecting this offer, turned extremely pale, and after pausing some moments, said in a faltering voice, "What, then, Sir, is your advice, in what manner—"

"I will say to him all that is necessary; trust the matter with me."

"No,—he deserves, at least, an apology from myself—though how to make it—"

She stopt, she hesitated, she went out of the room for pen and ink, she returned without them, and the agitation of her mind every instant increasing, she begged him, in a faint voice, to excuse her while she consulted with Mrs Charlton, and promising to wait upon him again, was hurrying away.

Mr Monckton, however, saw too great danger in so much emotion to trust her out of his sight: he told her, therefore, that she would only encrease her perplexity, without reaping any advantage, by an application to Mrs Charlton; that if she was really sincere in wishing to recede, there was not a moment to be lost, and Delvile should immediately be pursued.

Cecilia, sensible of the truth of this speech, and once more recollecting the unaffected earnestness with which, but an hour or two before, she had herself desired to renounce this engagement, now summoned her utmost courage to her aid, and, after a short, but painful

painful struggle, determined to act consistently with her professions and her character, and, by one great and final effort, to conclude all her doubts, and try to silence even her regret, by completing the triumph of fortitude over inclination.

She called, therefore, for pen and ink, and without venturing herself from the room, wrote the following letter.

To MORTIMER DELVILE, Esq.

Accuse me not of caprice, and pardon my irresolution, when you find me shrinking with terror from the promise I have made, and no longer either able or willing to perform it. The reproaches of your family I should very ill endure; but the reproaches of my own heart for an action I can neither approve nor defend, would be still more oppressive. With such a weight upon the mind, length of life would be burthensome; with a sensation of guilt early death would be terrific! These being my notions of the engagement into which we have entered, you cannot wonder, and you have still less reason to repine, that I dare not fulfil it. Alas! where would be your chance of happiness with one who in the very act of becoming yours would forfeit her own!

I blush at this tardy recantation, and I grieve at the disappointment it may occasion

sion you: but I have yielded to the exhortations of an inward monitor, who is never to be neglected with impunity. Consult him yourself; and I shall need no other advocate.

Adieu, and may all felicity attend you! If to hear of the almost total privation of mine, will mitigate the resentment with which you will probably read this letter, it may be mitigated but too easily! Yet my consent to a clandestine action shall never be repeated; and though I confess to you I am not happy, I solemnly declare my resolution is unalterable. A little reflection will tell you I am right, though a great deal of lenity may scarce suffice to make you pardon my being right no sooner.

C. B.

This letter, which with trembling haste, resulting from a fear of her own steadiness, she folded and sealed, Mr Monckton, from the same apprehension, yet more eagerly received, and scarce waiting to bid her good morning, mounted his horse, and pursued his way to London.

Cecilia returned to Mrs Charlton to acquaint her with what had passed: and notwithstanding the sorrow she felt in apparently injuring the man whom, in the whole world, she most wished to oblige, she yet found a satisfaction in the sacrifice she had made,
that

that recompensed her for much of her sufferings, and soothed her into something like tranquillity ; the true power of virtue she had scarce experienced before, for she found it a resource against the cruellest dejection, and a supporter in the bitterest disappointment.

C H A P. IV.

A N E M B A R R A S S M E N T.

THE day passed on without any intelligence; the next day, also, passed in the same manner, and on the third, which was her birth-day, Cecilia became of age.

The preparations which had long been making among her tenants to celebrate this event, Cecilia appeared to take some share, and endeavoured to find some pleasure in. She gave a public dinner to all who were willing to partake of it, she promised redress to those who complained of hard usage, she pardoned many debts, and distributed money, food, and cloathing to the poor. These benevolent occupations made time seem less heavy, and while they freed her from solitude, diverted her suspense. She still, however, continued at the house of Mrs Charlton, the workmen

workmen having disappointed her in finishing her own.

But, in defiance of her utmost exertion, towards the evening of this day the uneasiness of her uncertainty grew almost intolerable. The next morning she had promised Delvile to set out for London, and he expected the morning after to claim her for his wife; yet Mr Monckton neither sent nor came, and she knew not if her letter was delivered, or if still he was unprepared for the disappointment by which he was awaited. A secret regret for the unhappiness she must occasion him, which silently yet powerfully reproached her, stole fast upon her mind, and poisoned its tranquillity; for though her opinion was invariable in holding his proposal to be wrong, she thought too highly of his character to believe he would have made it but from a mistaken notion it was right. She painted him, therefore, to herself, as glowing with indignation, accusing her of inconsistency, and perhaps suspecting her of coquetry, and imputing her change of conduct to motives the most trifling and narrow, till with resentment and disdain, he drove her wholly from his thoughts.

In a few minutes, however, the picture was reversed; Delvile no more appeared storming nor unreasonable; his face wore an aspect of sorrow, and his brow was clouded with disappointment: he forebore to reproach her,

her, but the look which her imagination delineated was more piercing than words of severest import.

These images pursued and tormented her, drew tears from her eyes, and loaded her heart with anguish. Yet, when she recollects that her conduct had had in view an higher motive than pleasing Delvile, she felt that it ought to offer her an higher satisfaction : she tried, therefore, to revive her spirits, by reflecting upon her integrity, and refused all indulgence to this enervating sadness, beyond what the weakness of human nature demands, as some relief to its sufferings upon every fresh attack of misery.

A conduct such as this was the best antidote against affliction, whose arrows are never with so little difficulty repelled, as when they light upon a conscience which no self-reproach has laid bare to their malignancy.

Before six o'clock the next morning, her maid came to her bedside with the following letter, which she told her had been brought by an express.

To Miss BEVERLEY.

May this letter, with one only from Delvile-Castle, be the last that *Miss Beverley* may ever receive !

Yet sweet to me as is that hope, I write in the utmost uneasiness ; I have just heard that

that a gentleman, whom, by the description that is given of him, I imagine is Mr Monckton, has been in search of me with a letter which he was anxious to deliver immediately.

Perhaps this letter is from Miss Beverley, perhaps it contains directions which ought instantly to be followed: could I divine what they are, with what eagerness would I study to anticipate their execution! It will not, I hope, be too late to receive them on Saturday, when her power over my actions will be confirmed, and when every wish she will communicate, shall be gratefully, joyfully, and with delight fulfilled.

I have sought Belfield in vain; he has left Lord Vannelt, and no one knows whither he is gone. I have been obliged, therefore, to trust a stranger to draw up the bond; but he is a man of good character, and the time of secrecy will be too short to put his discretion in much danger. To-morrow, Friday, I shall spend solely in endeavouring to discover Mr Monckton; I have leisure sufficient for the search, since so prosperous has been my diligence, that *every thing is prepared!*

I have seen some lodgings in Pall-Mall, which I think are commodious and will suit you: send a servant, therefore, before you to secure them. If upon your arrival I should venture to meet you there, be not, I beseech you, offended or alarmed; I shall take every possible

possible precaution neither to be known nor seen, and I will stay with you only three minutes. The messenger who carries this is ignorant from whom it comes, for I fear his repeating my name among your servants, and he could scarce return to me with an answer before you will yourself be in town. Yes, loveliest Cecilia! at the very moment you receive this letter, the chaise will, I flatter myself, be at the door, which is to bring to me a treasure that will enrich every future hour of my life! And oh, as to me it will be exhaustless, may but its sweet dispenser experience some share of the happiness she bestows, and then what, save her own purity, will be so perfect, so unfulfilled, as the felicity of her

M. D?

The perturbation of Cecilia upon reading this letter was unspeakable: Mr Monckton, she found, had been wholly unsuccessful, all her heroism had answered no purpose, and the transaction was as backward as before she had exerted it.

She was now, therefore, called upon to think and act entirely for herself. Her opinion was still the same, nor did her resolution waver, yet how to put it in execution she could not discern.

To write to him was impossible, since she was ignorant where he was to be found; to disappoint

disappoint him at the last moment she could not resolve, since such a conduct appeared to her unfeeling and unjustifiable : for a few instants she thought of having him waited for at night in London, with a letter ; but the danger of entrusting any one with such a commission, and the uncertainty of finding him, should he disguise himself, made the success of this scheme too precarious for trial.

One expedient alone occurred to her, which, though she felt to be hazardous, she believed was without an alternative : this was no other than hastening to London herself, consenting to the interview he had proposed in Pall-Mall, and then, by strongly stating her objections, and confessing the grief they occasioned her, to pique at once his generosity and his pride upon releasing her himself from the engagement into which he had entered.

She had no time to deliberate ; her plan, therefore, was decided almost as soon as formed, and every moment being precious, she was obliged to awaken Mrs Charlton, and communicate to her at once the letter from Delvile, and the new resolution she had taken.

Mrs Charlton, having no object in view but the happiness of her young friend, with a facility that looked not for objections, and scarce saw them when presented, agreed to the expedition, and kindly consented to accompany her to London ; for Cecilia, however concerned to hurry and fatigue her, was too

anxious for the sanction of her presence to hesitate in soliciting it.

A chaise, therefore, was ordered; and with post-horses for speed, and two servants on horseback, the moment Mrs Charlton was ready, they set out on their journey.

Scarce had they proceeded two miles on their way, when they were met by Mr Monckton, who was hastening to their house.

Amazed and alarmed at a sight so unexpected, he stopt the chaise to enquire whether they were going.

Cecilia, without answering, asked if her letter had yet been received?

"I could not," said Mr Monckton, "deliver it to a man who was not to be found: I was this moment coming to acquaint you how vainly I had sought him; but still that your journey is unnecessary, unless voluntary, since I have left it at the house where you told me you should meet to-morrow morning, and where he must then unavoidably receive it."

"Indeed, Sir," cried Cecilia, "to-morrow morning will be too late,—in conscience, in justice, and even in decency too late! I *must* therefore, go to town; yet I go not, believe me, in opposition to your injunctions, but to enable myself, without treachery or dis-honour, to fulfil them."

Mr Monckton, aghast and confounded, made not any answer, till Cecilia gave orders to the postilion to drive on: he then hastily called

called to stop him, and began the warmest expostulation; but Cecilia, firm when she believed herself right, though wavering when fearful she was wrong, told him it was now too late to change her plan, and repeating her orders to the postilion, left him to his own reflections; grieved herself to reject his counsel, yet too intently occupied by her own affairs and designs, to think long of any other.

C H A P. V.

A TORMENT.

AT —— they stopt for dinner; Mrs Charlton being too much fatigued to go on without some rest, though the haste of Cecilia to meet Delvile time enough for new arranging their affairs, made her regret every moment that was spent upon the road.

Their meal was not long, and they were returning to their chaise, when they were suddenly encountered by Mr Morrice, who was just alighted from his horse.

He congratulated himself upon the happiness of meeting them with the air of a man who nothing doubted that happiness being mutual; then hastening to speak of the Grove,

"I could hardly," he cried, "get away; my friend Monckton won't know what to do without me, for Lady Margaret, poor old soul, is in a shocking bad way indeed; there's hardly any staying in the room with her; her breathing is just like the grunting of a hog. She can't possibly last long, for she's quite upon her last legs, and tumbles about so when she walks alone, one would swear she was drunk."

"If you take infirmity," said Mrs Charlton, who was now helped into the chaise, "for intoxication, you must suppose no old person sober."

"Vastly well said, ma'am," cried he; "I really forgot your being an old lady yourself, or I should not have made the observation. However, as to poor Lady Margaret, she may do as well as ever by and by, for she has an excellent constitution, and I suppose she has been hardly any better than she is now these forty years, for I remember when I was quite a boy hearing her called a limping old puddle."

"Well, we'll discuss this matter, if you please," said Cecilia, "some other time," and ordered the postilion to drive on. But before they came to their next stage, Morrice having changed his horse, joined them, and rode on by their side, begging them to observe what haste he had made on purpose to have the pleasure of escorting them.

This

This forwardness was very offensive to Mrs Charlton, whose years and character had long procured her more deference and respect: but Cecilia, anxious only to hasten her journey, was indifferent to every thing, save what retarded it.

At the same inn they both again changed horses, and he still continued riding with them, and occasionally talking, till they were within twenty miles of London, when a disturbance upon the road exciting his curiosity, he hastily rode away from them to enquire into its cause.

Upon coming up to the place whence it proceeded, they saw a party of gentlemen on horseback surrounding a chaise which had been just overturned; and while the confusion in the road obliged the postilion to stop, Cecilia heard a lady's voice exclaiming, "I declare I dare say I am killed!" and instantly recollecting Miss Larolles, the fear of discovery and delay made her desire the man to drive on with all speed. He was preparing to obey her, but Morrice, galloping after them, called out, "Miss Beverley, one of the ladies that has been overturned, is an acquaintance of your's. I used to see her with you at Mrs Harrel's."

"Did you?" said Cecilia, much disconcerted, "I hope she is not hurt?"

"No, not at all; but the lady with her is bruised to death; won't you come and see her?"

"I am too much in haste at present,—and I can do them no good; but Mrs Charlton I am sure will spare her servant, if he can be of any use."

"O, but the young lady wants to speak to you; she is coming up to the chaise as fast as ever she can."

"And how should she know me?" cried Cecilia, with much surprise; "I am sure she could not see me."

"O, I told her," answered Morrice, with a nod of self-approbation for what he had done, "I told her it was you, for I knew I could soon overtake you."

Displeasure at this officiousness was unavailing, for looking out of the window, she perceived Miss Larolles, followed by half her party, not three paces from the chaise.

"O my dear creature," she called out, "what a terrible accident! I assure you I am so monstrously frightened you've no idea. It's the luckiest thing in the world that you were going this way. Never any thing happened so excessively provoking; you've no notion what a fall we've had. It's horrid shocking, I assure you. How have you been all this time? You can't conceive how glad I am to see you."

"And to which will Miss Beverley answer first," cried a voice which announced Mr Gosport, "the joy or the sorrow? For so adroitly are they blended, that a common auditor

ditor could with difficulty decide whether condolence or congratulation should have the precedence."

"How can you be so excessive horrid," cried Miss Larolles, "to talk of congratulation, when one's in such a shocking panic, that one does not know if one's dead or alive!"

"Dead, then, for any wager," returned he, "if we may judge from your stillness."

"I desire, now, you won't begin joking," cried she, "for I assure you it's an excessive serious affair. I was never so rejoiced in my life as when I found I was not killed. I've been so squeezed you've nonotion. I thought for a full hour I had broke both my arms."

"And my heart at the same time," said Mr Gosport; "I hope you did not imagine that the least fragile of the three?"

"All our hearts, give me leave to add," said Captain Aresby—just then advancing, "all our hearts must have been *abimés*, by the indisposition of Miss Larolles, had not their doom been fortunately revoked by the sight of Miss Beverley."

"Well, this is excessive odd," cried Miss Larolles, "that every body should run away so from poor Mrs Mears; she'll be so affronted you've no idea. I thought, Captain Aresby, you would have stayed to take care of her."

"I'll run and see how she is myself," cried Morrice, and away he galloped.

"Really, ma'am," said the Captain, "I am quite *au desespoir* to have failed in any of my devoirs; but I make it a principle to be a mere looker on upon these occasions, lest I should be so unhappy as to commit any *faux pas* by too much *emprissement*."

"An admirable caution!" said Mr Gosport, "and, to so ardent a temper, a necessary check!"

Cecilia, whom the surprise and vexation of so unseasonable a meeting, when she particularly wished to have escaped all notice, had hitherto kept in painful silence, began now to recover some presence of mind; and making her compliments to Miss Larolles and Mr Gosport, with a slight bow to the Captain, she apologized for hurrying away, but told them she had an engagement in London which could not be deferred, and was then giving orders to the postilion to drive on, when Morrice returning full speed, called out "The poor lady's so bad she is not able to stir a step; she can't put a foot to the ground, and she says she's quite black and blue; so I told her I was sure Miss Beverley would not refuse to make room for her in her chaise, till the other can be put to rights; and she says she shall take it as a great favour. Here, postilion, a little more to the right! come, ladies and gentlemen, get out of the way."

This impertinence, however extraordinary, Cecilia could not oppose; for Mrs Charlton, ever

ever compassionate and complying where there was any appearance of distress, instantly seconded the proposal: the chaise, therefore, was turned back, and she was obliged to offer a place in it to Mrs Mears, who, though more frightened than hurt, readily accepted it, notwithstanding, to make way for her without incommoding Mrs Charlton she was forced to get out herself.

She failed not, however, to desire that all possible expedition might be used in refitting the other chaise for their reception; and all the gentlemen but one, dismounted their horses, in order to assist, or seem to assist in getting it ready.

The only unconcerned spectator in the midst of the apparent general bustle, was Mr Meadows; who viewed all that passed without troubling himself to interfere, and with an air of the most evident carelessness whether matters went well or went ill.

Miss Laralles, now returning to the scene of action, suddenly screamed out, "O dear, where's my little dog! I never thought of him, I declare! I love him better than any thing in the world. I would not have him hurt for an hundred thousand pounds. Lord, where is he?"

"Crushed or suffocated in the overturn, no doubt," said Mr Gosport; "but as you must have been his executioner, what softer death

could he die ? If you will yourself inflict the punishment, I will submit to the same fate."

" Lord, how you love to plague one !" cried she : and then enquired among the servants what was become of her dog. The poor little animal, forgotten by its mistress, and disregarded by all others, was now discovered by its yelping ; and soon found to have been the most material sufferer by the overturn, one of its fore legs being broken.

Could screams or lamentations, reproaches to the servants, or complaints against the destinies, have abated his pain, or made a callus of the fracture, but short would have been the duration of his misery ; for neither words were saved, nor lungs were spared, the very air was rent with cries, and all present were upbraided as if accomplices in the disaster.

The postilion, at length, interrupted this vociferation with news that the chaise was again fit for use ; and Cecilia, eager to be gone, finding him little regarded, repeated what he said to Miss Larolles.

" The chaise?" cried she, " why you don't suppose I'll ever get into that horrid chaise any more ? I do assure you I would not upon any account."

" Not get into it ?" said Cecilia, " for what purpose, then, have we all waited till it was ready ?"

" O, I declare I would not go in it for forty thousand worlds. I would rather walk to

to an inn, if its a hundred and fifty miles off."

" But as it happens," said Mr Gosport, " to be only seven miles, I fancy you will condescend to ride."

" Seven miles! Lord how shocking! you frighten me so you have no idea. Poor Mrs Mears! She'll have to go quite alone. I dare say the chaise will be down fifty times by the way. Ten to one but she breaks her neck! only conceive how horrid! I assure you I am excessive glad I am out of it."

" Very friendly, indeed!" said Mr Gosport. " Mrs Mears, then, may break her bones at her leisure!"

Mrs Mears, however, when applied to, professed an equal aversion to the carriage in which she had been so unfortunate, and declared she would rather walk than return to it, though one of her ankles was already so swelled that she could hardly stand.

" Why then the best way, ladies," cried Morrice, with the look of a man happy in vanquishing all difficulties, " will be for Mrs Charlton, and that poor lady with the bruises, to go together in that sound chaise, and then for us gentlemen to escort this young lady and Miss Beverley on foot, till we all come to the next inn. Miss Beverley, I know, is an excellent walker, for I have heard Mr Monckton say so."

Cecilia, though in the utmost consternation at a proposal which must so long retard a journey she had so many reasons to wish hastened, knew not how either in decency or humanity to oppose it: and the fear of raising suspicion, from a consciousness how much there was to suspect, forced her to curb her impatience, and reduced her even to repeat the offer which Morrice had made, though she could scarce look at him for anger at his unseasonable forwardness.

No voice dissenting, the troop began to be formed. The foot consisted of the two young ladies and Mr Gosport, who alighted to walk with Cecilia; the cavalry, of Mr Meadows, the Captain, and Morrice, who walked their horses a foot pace, while the rest of the party rode on with the chaise as attendants upon Mrs Mears.

Just before they set off, Mr Meadows, riding negligently up to the carriage, exerted himself so far as to say to Mrs Mears, "Are you hurt, ma'am?" and, at the same instant, seeming to recollect Cecilia, he turned about, and yawning while he touched his hat, said, "O, how d'ye do, ma'am?" and then, without waiting an answer to either of his questions, flapped it over his eyes, and joined the cavalcade, though without appearing to have any consciousness that he belonged to it.

Cecilia would most gladly have used the rejected chaise herself, but could not make such a proposal

a proposal to Mrs Charlton, who was past the age and the courage for even any appearance of enterprize. Upon enquiry, however, she had the satisfaction to hear that the distance to the next stage was but two miles, though multiplied to seven by the malice of Mr. Gosport.

Miss Larolles carried her little dog in her arms, declaring she would never more trust him a moment away from her. She acquainted Cecilia that she had been for some time upon a visit to Mrs Mears, who, with the rest of the party, had taken her to see — house and gardens, where they had made an early dinner, from which they were just returning home when the chaise broke down.

She then proceeded, with her usual volubility, to relate the little nothings that had passed since the winter, flying from subject to subject, with no meaning but to be heard, and no wish but to talk, ever rapid in speech, though minute in detail. This loquacity met not with any interruption, save now and then a sarcastic remark from Mr Gosport; for Cecilia was too much occupied by her own affairs to answer or listen to such uninteresting discourse.

Her silence, however, was at length forcibly broken; Mr Gosport taking advantage of the first moment Miss Larolles stopt for breath, said, “ Pray what carries you to town,

town, Miss Beverley, at this time of the year?"

Cecilia, whose thoughts had been wholly employed upon what would pass at her approaching meeting with Delvile, was so entirely unprepared for this question, that she could make to it no manner of answer, till Mr Gosport, in a tone of some surprise, repeated it, and then, not without hesitation, "I have some busineſs, Sir, in London,— pray how long have you been in the country?"

"Busineſs, have you?" cried he, struck by her evasion; "and pray what can you and busineſs have in common?"

"More than you imagine," answered she, with greater steadiness; "and perhaps before long I may even have enough to teach me the enjoyment of leisure."

"Why you don't pretend to play my Lady Notable, and become your own steward?"

"And what can I do better?"

"What? Why seek one ready made to take the trouble off your hands. There are such creatures to be found, I promise you: beasts of burthen, who will freely undertake the management of your estate, for no other reward than the trifling one of possessing it. Can you no where meet with such an animal?"

"I don't

"I don't know," answered she, laughing, "I have not been looking out."

"And have none such made application to you?"

"Why no,—I believe not."

"Fie, fie! no register-office keeper has been pestered with more claimants. You know they assault you by dozens."

"You must pardon me, indeed, I know not any such thing."

"You know, then, why they do not, and that is much the same."

"I may conjecture why, at least: the place, I suppose, is not worth the service."

"No, no; the place, they conclude, is already seized, and the fee-simple of the estate is the heart of the owner. Is it not so?"

"The heart of the owner," answered she, a little confused, "may, indeed, be simple, but not, perhaps, so easily seized as you imagine."

"Have you, then, wisely saved it from a storm, by a generous surrender? you have been, indeed, in an excellent school for the study both of attack and defence; Delvile-Castle is a fortress which, even in ruins, proves its strength by its antiquity: and it teaches, also, an admirable lesson, by displaying the dangerous, the infallible power of time, which defies all might, and undermines all strength; which breaks down every barrier, and shews nothing durable but itself."

Then

Then looking at her with an arch earnestness, "I think," he added, "you made a long visit there; did this observation never occur to you? did you never perceive, never *feel*, rather, the insidious properties of time?"

"Yes, certainly," answered she, alarmed at the very mention of Delvile-Castle, yet affecting to understand literally what was said metaphorically, "the havock of time upon the place could not fail striking me."

"And was its havock," said he, yet more archly, "merely external? is all within safe, sound and firm? and did the length of your residence shew its power by no new mischief?"

"Doubtless, not," answered she, with the same pretended ignorance; "the place is not in so desperate a condition as to exhibit any visible marks of decay in the course of three or four months."

"And, do you not know," cried he, "that the place to which I allude may receive a mischief in as many minutes which double the number of years cannot rectify? The internal parts of a building are not less vulnerable to accident than its outside; and though the evil may more easily be concealed, it will with greater difficulty be remedied. Many a fair structure have I seen, which, like that now before me," (looking with much significance at Cecilia,) "has to the eye seemed perfect in all its parts, and unhurt either by time or casualty

faulty, while within, some lurking evil, some latent injury, has secretly worked its way into the very heart of the edifice, where it has consumed its strength, and laid waste its powers, till, sinking deeper and deeper, it has sapped its very foundation, before the superstructure has exhibited any token of danger. Is such an accident among the things you hold to be possible?"

" Your language," said she, colouring very high, " is so florid, that I must own it renders your meaning rather obscure."

" Shall I illustrate it by an example? Suppose, during your abode in Delvile-Castle,—"

" No, no," interrupted she, with involuntary quickness, " why should I trouble you to make illustrations?"

" O pray, my dear creature," cried Miss Larolles, " how is Mrs Harrel? I was never so sorry for any body in my life. I quite forgot to ask after her."

" Ay, poor Harrel!" cried Morrice, " he was a great loss to his friends. I had just begun to have a regard for him: we were growing extremely intimate. Poor fellow! he really gave most excellent dinners."

" Harrel?" suddenly exclaimed Mr Meadows, who seemed just then to first hear what was going forward, " who was he?"

" O, as good-natured a fellow as ever I knew in my life," answered Morrice; " he was never out of humour: he was drinking and

and singing and dancing to the very last moment. Don't you remember him, Sir, that night at Vauxhall?"

Mr Meadows made not any answer, but rode languidly on.

Morrice, ever more flippant than sagacious, called out, "I really believe the gentleman's deaf! he won't so much as say *bump*, *hay*, now; but I'll give him such a hollow in his ears, as shall make him hear me whether he will or no. Sir! I say!" bawling aloud, "have you forgot that night at Vauxhall?"

Mr Meadows, starting at being thus shouted at, looked towards Morrice with some surprise, and said, "Were you so obliging, Sir, as to speak to me?"

"Lord, yes, Sir," said Morrice, amazed; "I thought you had asked something about Mr Harrel, so I just made an answer to it;—that's all."

"Sir, you are very good," returned he, slightly bowing and then looking another way, as if thoroughly satisfied with what had passed.

"But I say, Sir," resumed Morrice, "don't you remember how Mr Harrel—"

"Mr who, Sir?"

"Mr Harrel, Sir; was not you just now asking me who he was?"

"O, ay, true," cried Meadows, in a tone of extreme weariness, "I am much obliged to you. Pray give my respects to him."

And,

And, touching his hat, he was riding away ; but the astonished Morrice called out, "Your respects to him ? why lord ! Sir, don't you know he's dead ?"

" Dead !—who, Sir ?"

" Why Mr Harrel, Sir."

" Harrel !—O, very true," cried Meadows, with a face of sudden recollection ; " he shot himself, I think, or was knocked down, or something of that sort, I remember it perfectly."

" O pray, cried Miss Larolles, " don't let's talk about it, it's the cruellest thing I ever knew in my life. I assure you I was so shocked, I thought I should never have got the better of it. I remember the next night an Ranelagh I could talk of nothing else. I dare say I told it to five hundred people, I assure you I was tired to death ; only conceive how distressing !"

" An excellent method," cried Mr Gofport, " to drive it out of your own head, by driving it into the heads of your neighbours ! But were you not afraid, by such an ebullition of pathos, to burst as many hearts as you had auditors ?"

" O, I assure you," cried she, " every body was so excessive shocked you've no notion ; one heard of nothing else ; all the world was raving mad about it."

" Really yes," cried the Captain ; " the subject was *obsédé* upon one *partout*. There was

was scarce any breathing for it : it poured from all directions ; I must confess I was *anxious* with it to a degree."

" But the most shocking thing in nature," cried Miss Larolles, " was going to the sale. I never missed a single day. One used to meet the whole world there, and every body was so sorry you can't conceive. It was quite horrid. I assure you I never suffered so much before ; it made me so unhappy you can't imagine."

" That I am most ready to grant," said Mr Gosport, " be the powers of imagination ever so excentric."

" Sir Rober Floyer and Mr Marriot," continued Miss Larolles, " have behaved so ill you've no idea, for they have done nothing ever since but say how monstrously Mr Harrel had cheated them, and how they lost such immense sums by him ;—only conceive how ill-natur'd !"

" And they complain," cried Morrice, " that old Mr Delvile used them worse ; for that when they had been defrauded of all that money on purpose to pay their addressess to Miss Beverley, he would never let them see her, but all of a sudden took her off into the country, on purpose to marry her to his own son."

The cheeks of Cecilia now glowed with the deepest blushes ; but finding by a general silence that she was expected to make some answer,

answer, she said, with what unconcern she could assume, "They were very much mistaken; Mr Delvile had no such view."

"Indeed?" cried Mr Gosport, again perceiving her change of countenance;" and is it possible you have actually escaped a siege, while every body concluded you taken by assault? pray where is young Delvile at present?"

"I don't—I can't tell, Sir."

"Is it long since you have seen him?"

"It is two months," answered she, with yet more hesitation, "since I was at Delvile-Castle."

"O, but," cried Morrice, "did not you see him while he was in Suffolk? I believe, indeed, he is there now, for it was only yesterday I heard of his coming down, by a gentleman who called upon Lady Margaret, and told us he had seen a stranger, a day or two ago, at Mrs Charlton's door, and when he asked who he was, they told him his name was Delvile, and said he was on a visit at Mr Biddulph's."

Cecilia was quite confounded by this speech; to have it known that Delvile had visited her, was in itself alarming; but to have her own equivocation thus glaringly exposed, was infinitely more dangerous. The just suspicions to which it must give rise filled her with dread, and the palpable evasion in which she had been discovered, overwhelmed her with confusion.

"So

" So you had forgotten," said Mr Gosport, looking at her with much archness, " that you had seen him *within* the two months? but no wonder; for where is the lady, who having so many admirers, can be at the trouble to remember which of them she saw last? or who, being so accustomed to adulation, can hold it worth while to enquire whence it comes? A thousand Mr Delviles are to Miss Beverley but as one; used from them all to the same tale, she regards them not individually as lovers, but collectively as men; and to gather, even from herself, which she is most inclined to favour, she must probably desire, like Portia in the Merchant of Venice, that their names may be run over one by one, before she can distinctly tell which is which."

The gallant gaiety of this speech was some relief to Cecilia, who was beginning a laughing reply, when Morrice called out, " That man looks as if he was upon the scout." And, raising hereyes, she perceived a man onhorseback, who, though much muffled up, his hat flapped, and a handkerchief held to his mouth and chin, she instantly, by his air and figure, recognized to be Delvile.

In much consternation at this sight, she forgot what she meant to say, and dropping her eyes, walked silently on. Mr Gosport, attentive to her motions, looked from her to the horseman, and after a short examination, said,

" I

"I think I have seen that man before; have you, Miss Beverley?" "Me?—no,"—answered she, "I believe not,—I hardly, indeed, see him now."

"I have, I am pretty sure," said Morrice; "and if I could see his face, I dare say I should recollect him."

"He seems very willing to know if he can recollect any of us," said Mr Gosport, "and, if I am not mistaken, he sees much better than he is seen."

He was now come up to them, and though a glance sufficed to discover the object of his search, the sight of the party with which she was surrounded made him not dare stop or speak to her, and therefore, clapping spurs to his horse, he galloped past them.

"See," cried Morrice, looking after him, "how he turns round to examine us! I wonder who he is!"

"Perhaps some highwayman!" cried Miss Larolles; "I assure you I am in a prodigious fright; I should hate to be robbed so you can't think."

"I was going to make much the same conjecture," said Mr Gosport, "and, if I am not greatly deceived, that man is a robber of no common sort. What think you, Miss Beverley, can you discern a thief in disguise?"

"No, indeed; I pretend to no such extraordinary knowledge."

"That's

" That's true, for all that you pretend is extraordinary ignorance."

" I have a good mind," said Morrice " to ride after him, and see what he is about."

" What for?" exclaimed Cecilia, greatly alarmed; " there can certainly be no occasion!"

" No, pray don't," cried Miss Larolles, " for I assure you if he should come back to rob us, I should die upon the spot. Nothing could be so disagreeable; I should scream so, you've no idea."

Morrice then gave up the proposal, and they walked quietly on; but Cecilia was extremely disturbed by this accident; she readily conjectured that, impatient for her arrival, Delvile had ridden that way, to see what had retarded her, and shewas sensible that nothing could be so desirable as an immediate explanation of the motive of her journey. Such a meeting, therefore, had she been alone, was just what she could have wished, though, thus unluckily encompassed, it only added to her anxiety.

Involuntarily, however, she quickened her pace, through her eagerness to be relieved from so troublesome a party: but Miss Larolles, who was in no such haste, protested she could not keep up with her; saying, " You don't consider that I have got this sweet little dog to carry, and he is such a shocking plague to

to me you've no notion. Only conceive what a weight he is!

"Pray, ma'am," cried Morrice, "let me take him for you; I'll be very careful of him, I promise you; and you need not be afraid to trust me, for I understand more about dogs than about any thing."

Miss Larolles, after many fond caresses, being really weary, consented, and Morrice placed the little animal before him on horseback: but while this matter was adjusting, and Miss Larolles was giving directions how she would have it held, Morrice exclaimed, "Look, look! that man is coming back! He is certainly watching us. There! now he's going off again!—I suppose he saw me remarking him."

"I dare say he's laying in wait to rob us," said Miss Larolles; "so when we turn off the high road, to go to Mrs Mears, I suppose he'll come galloping after us. It's excessive horrid, I assure you."

"'Tis a petrifying thing," said the captain, "that one must always be *degouté* by some wretched being or other of this sort; but pray be not deranged, I will ride after him, if you please, and do *mon possible* to get rid of him."

"Indeed I wish you would," answered Miss Larolles, "for I assure you he has put such shocking notions into my head, it's quite disagreeable."

"I shall make it a principle," said the Captain, "to have the honour of obeying you." And was riding off, when Cecilia, in great agitation, called out, "Why should you go, Sir?—he is not in our way, pray let him alone—for what purpose should you pursue him?"

"I hope," said Mr Gosport, "for the purpose of making him join our company, to some part of which I fancy he would be no very intolerable addition."

This speech again silenced Cecilia, who perceived, with the utmost confusion, that both Delvile and herself were undoubtedly suspected by Mr Gosport, if not already actually betrayed to him. She was obliged, therefore, to let the matter take its course, though quite sick with apprehension lest a full discovery should follow the projected pursuit.

The Captain, who wanted not courage, however deeply in vanity and affectation he had buried common sense, stood suspended, upon the request of Cecilia that he would not go, and, with a shrug of distress, said "Give me leave to own I am *parfaitement* in a state the most *accablant* in the world: nothing could give me greater pleasure than to profit of the occasion to accommodate either of these ladies; but as they proceed upon different principles, I am *indecidé* to a degree which way to turn myself!"

"Put

"Put it to the vote, then," said Morrice; "the two ladies have both spoke; now, then, for the gentlemen. Come, Sir," to Mr Gosport, "what say you?"

"O, fetch the culprit back, by all means," answered he; "and then let us all insist upon his opening his cause, by telling us in what he has offended us; for there is no part of his business, I believe, with which we are less acquainted."

"Well," said Morrice, "I'm for asking him a few questions too; so is the Captain; so every body has spoke but you, Sir," addressing himself to Mr Meadows; "So now, Sir, let's hear your opinion."

Mr Meadows, appearing wholly inattentive, rode on. "Why, Sir! I say!" cried Morrice, louder, "we are all waiting for your vote. Pray what is the gentleman's name? it's duced hard to make him hear one."

"His name is Meadows," said Miss Larrolles, in a low voice, "and I assure you sometimes he won't hear people by the hour together. He's so excessive absent you've no notion. One day he made me so mad, that I could not help crying; and Mr Sawyer was standing by the whole time! and I assure you I believe he laughed at me. Only conceive how distressing!"

"May be," said Morrice, "it's out of bashfulness: perhaps he thinks we shall cut him up."

" Bashfulness," repeated Miss Larolles : " Lord, you don't conceive the thing at all. Why he's at the very head of the *ton*. There's nothing in the world so fashionable as taking no notice of things, and never seeing people, and saying nothing at all, and never hearing a word, and not knowing one's own acquaintance, and always finding fault. All the *ton* do so, and I assure you as to Mr Meadows, he's so excessively courted by every body, that if he does but say a syllable, he thinks it such an immense favour, you've no idea."

This account, however little alluring in itself, of his celebrity, was yet sufficient to make Morrice covet his further acquaintance : for Morrice was ever attentive to turn his pleasure to his profit, and never negligent of his interest, but when ignorant how to pursue it. He returned, therefore, to the charge, though by no means with the same freedom he had begun it, and lowering his voice to a tone of respect and submission, he said, " Pray, Sir, may we take the liberty to ask your advice, whether we shall go on, or take a turn back ? "

Mr Meadows made not any answer ; but when Morrice was going to repeat his question, without appearing even to know that he was near him, he abruptly said to Miss Larolles, " Pray what is become of Mrs Mears ? I don't see her amongst us."

" Lord,

"Lord, Mr Meadows," exclaimed she, "how can you be so odd? Don't you remember she went on in a chaise to the inn?"

"O, ay, true," cried he; "I protest I had quite forgot it; I beg your pardon, indeed. Yes, I recollect now,—she fell off her horse."

"Her horse! Why you know she was in her chaise."

"Her chaise was it?—ay, true, so it was. Poor thing!—I am glad she was not hurt."

"Not hurt? Why she's so excessively bruised, she can't stir a step! Only conceive what a memory you've got!"

"I am most extremely sorry for her indeed," cried he, again stretching himself and yawning; "poor soul!—I hope she won't die. Do you think she will?"

"Die!" repeated Miss Larolles, with a scream, "Lord, how shocking! You are really enough to frighten one to hear you."

"But Sir," said Morrice, "I wish you would be so kind as to give us your vote; the man will else be gone so far, we sha'n't be able to overtake him.—Though I do really believe that is the very fellow coming back to peep at us again!"

"I am *ennuyé* to a degree," cried the Captain; "he is certainly set upon us as a spy, and I must really beg leave to enquire of

D 3 him

him upon what principle he incommodes us." And instantly he rode after him.

" And so will I too," cried Morrice following.

Miss Larolles screamed after him to give her first her little dog ; but with a schoolboy's eagerness to be foremost, he galloped on without heeding her.

The uneasiness of Cecilia now encreased every moment ; the discovery of Delvile seemed unavoidable, and his impatient and indiscreet watchfulness must have rendered the motives of his disguise but too glaring. All she had left to hope was arriving at the inn before the detection was announced, and at least saving herself the cruel mortification of hearing the raillery which would follow it.

Even this, however, was not allowed her ; Miss Larolles, whom she had no means to quit, hardly stirred another step, from her anxiety for the dog, and the earnestness of her curiosity about the stranger. She loitered, stopt now to talk, and now to listen, and was scarce moved a yard from the spot where she had been left, when the Captain and Morrice returned.

" We could not for our lives overtake the fellow," said Morrice ; " he was well mounted, I promise you, and I'll warrant he knows what he's about, for he turned off so short at a place where there were two narrow lanes that

that we could not make out which way he went."

Cecilia, relieved and delighted by this unexpected escape, now recovered her composure, and was content to saunter on without repining.

"But though we could not seize his person," said the Captain, "we have debarraffed ourselves *tout à fait* from his pursuit; I hope therefore, Miss Larolles will make a revoke of her apprehensions."

The answer to this was nothing but a loud scream, with an exclamation, "Lord, where's my dog?"

"Your dog!" cried Morrice, looking aghast, "good stars! I never thought of him!"

"How excessive barbarous!" cried Miss Larolles, "you've killed him, I dare say. Only think how shocking! I had rather have seen any body served so in the world. I shall never forgive it, I assure you."

"Lord, ma'am," said Morrice, "how can you suppose I've killed him? poor, pretty creature, I'm sure I liked him prodigiously. I can't think for my life where he can be: but I have a notion he must have dropt down somewhere while I happened to be on the full gallop. I'll go look him, however, for we went at such a rate that I never missed him."

Away again rode Morrice.

"I am *abimé* to the greatest degree," said the Captain, "that the poor little sweet fellow should be lost: if I had thought him in any danger, I would have made it a principle to have had a regard to his person myself. Will you give me leave, ma'am, to have the honour of seeking him *partout*?"

"O, I wish you would with all my heart; for I assure you if I don't find him, I shall think it so excessive distressing you can't conceive."

The Captain touched his hat, and was gone.

These repeated impediments almost robbed Cecilia of all patience; yet her total inability of resistance obliged her to submit, and compelled her to go, stop, or turn, according to their own motions.

"Now if Mr Meadows had the least good-nature in the world," said Miss Larrolles, "he would offer to help us; but he's so excessive odd, that! I believe if we were all of us to fall down and break our necks, he would be so absent, he would hardly take the trouble to ask us how we did."

"Why in so desperate a case," said Mr Gosport, "the trouble would be rather superfluous. However, don't repine that one of the cavaliers stays with us by way of guard, lest your friend the spy should take us by surprise while our troop is dispersed."

"Q

" O Lord," cried Miss Larolles, " now you put it in my head, I dare say that wretch has got my dog! only think how horrid!"

" I saw plainly," said Mr Gosport, looking significantly at Cecilia, " that he was feloniously inclined, though I must confess I took him not for a dog-stealer."

Miss Larolles then, running up to Mr Meadows, called out, " I have a prodigious immense favour to ask of you, Mr Meadows."

" Ma'am!" cried Mr Meadows, with his usual start.

" It's only to know, whether if that horrid creature should come back, you could not just ride up to him and shoot him, before he gets to us? Now will you promise me to do it?"

" You are vastly good," said he, with a vacant smile; " what a charming evening! Do you love the country?"

" Yes, vastly; only I'm so monstrously tired, I can hardly stir a step. Do you like it?"

" The country? O no! I detest it! Dusty hedges, and chirping sparrows! 'Tis amazing to me any body can exist upon such terms."

" I assure you," cried Miss Larolles, " I'm quite of your opinion. I hate the country so you've no notion. I wish with all my heart it was all under ground. I declare, when I first go into it for the summer I cry

so you can't think. I like nothing but London.—Don't you?"

"London!" repeated Mr Meadows, "O melancholy! the sink of all vice and depravity. Streets without light! Houses without air! Neighbourhood without society! Talkers without listeners!—'Tis astonishing any rational being can endure to be so miserably immured."

"Lord, Mr Meadows," cried she, angrily, "I believe you would have one live no where!"

"True, very true, ma'am," said he, yawning, "one really lives no where; one does but vegetate, and wish it all at an end. Don't you find it so, ma'am?"

"Me! no indeed; I assure you I like living of all things. Whenever I'm ill, I'm in such a fright you've no idea. I always think I'm going to die, and it puts me so out of spirits you can't think—Does not it you too?"

Here Mr Meadows, looking another way, began to whistle.

"Lord," cried Miss Larolles, "how excessive distressing! to ask one question, and then never hear what one answers!"

Here the Captain returned alone; and Miss Larolles, flying to meet him, demanded where was her dog?

"I have the *malheur* to assure you," answered he, "that I never was more *aneanti* in

in my life! the pretty little fellow has broke another leg!"

Miss Larolles, in a passion of grief, then declared she was certain that Morrice had maimed him thus on purpose, and desired to know where the vile wretch was?

"He was so much discomposed at the incident," replied the Captain, "that he rode instantly another way. I took up the pretty fellow therefore myself, and have done *more* possible not to derange him."

The unfortunate little animal was then delivered to Miss Larolles; and after much lamentation, they at length continued their walk, and, without further adventure, arrived at the inn.

C H A P. VI.

AN INTERRUPTION.

BUT here, instead of finding, as she expected, Mrs Charlton and fresh horses in readiness, Cecilia saw neither chaise nor preparation; Mrs Charlton was quietly seated in a parlour, and drinking tea with Mrs Mears.

Vexed and disappointed, she ordered horses immediately to the chaise, and entered Mrs.

Charlton to lose no more time. But the various delays which had already retarded them, had made it now so late that it was impossible to get into London by day-light, and Mrs Charlton not having courage to be upon the road after dark, had settled to sleep at the inn, and purposed not to proceed till the next morning.

Half distracted at this new difficulty, Cecilia begged to speak with her alone, and then represented in the most earnest manner, the absolute necessity there was for her being in London that night: "Every thing," said she, "depends upon it, and the whole purpose of my journey will otherwise be lost, for Mr Delvile will else think himself extremely ill used, and to make him reparation, I may be compelled to submit to almost whatever terms he shall propose."

Mrs Charlton, kind and yielding, withheld not this entreaty, which Cecilia made with infinite pain to herself, from the reluctance she felt to pursuing her own interest and inclination in opposition to those of her worthy old friend: but as she was now circumstanced, she considered the immediate prosecution of her journey as her only resource against first irritating Delvile by an abrupt disappointment, and appeasing him next by a concession which would make that disappointment end in nothing.

The

The chaise was soon ready, and Mrs Charlton and Cecilia were rising to take leave of the company, when a man and horse galloped full speed into the inn-yard, and in less than a minute, Morrice bounced into the room.

"Ladies and gentlemen," cried he, quite out of breath with haste, "I have got some news for you! I've just found out who that person is that has been watching us."

Cecilia, starting at this most unwelcome intelligence, would now have run into the chaise without hearing him proceed; but Mrs Charlton, who knew neither whom nor what he meant, involuntarily stopt, and Cecilia, whose arm she leant upon, was compelled to stay.

Every one else eagerly desired to know who he was.

"Why I'll tell you," said he, "how I found him out. I was thinking in my own mind what I could possibly do to make amends for that unlucky accident about the dog, and just then I spied the very man that had made me drop him; so I thought at least I'd find out who he was. I rode up to him so quick, that he could not get away from me, though I saw plainly it was the thing he meant. But still he kept himself muffled up, just as he did before. Not so snug, thought I, my friend, I shall have you yet! It's a fine evening, Sir, says I; but he took no notice: so then I came more to the point; Sir, says I, I think I have had

had the pleasure of seeing you, though I quite forget where. Still he made no answer: if you have no objection, Sir, says I, I shall be glad to ride with you, for the night's coming on, and we have neither of us a servant. But then, without a wordspeaking, he rode on the quicker. However, I jogged by his side, as fast as he, and said, Pray, Sir, did you know any thing of that company you were looking at so hard just now? And at this he could hold out no longer; he turned to me in a most fierce passion, and said, pray, Sir, don't be troublesome. And then he got off; for when I found by his voice who he was, I let him alone."

Cecilia, who could bear to hear no more, again hastened Mrs Charlton, who now moved on; but Morrice, stepping between them both and the door, said, "Now do pray, Miss Beverley, gues who it was."

"No indeed, I cannot," said she, in the utmost confusion, "nor have I any time to hear. Come, dear madam, we shall be very late indeed."

"O but I *must* tell you before you go;— why it was young Mr Delvile! the same that I saw with you one night at the Pantheon, and that I used to meet last spring at Mr Harrel's."

"Mr Delvile!" repeated every one; "very strange he should not speak."

"Pray

"Pray, ma'am," continued Morrice, "is it not the same gentleman that was at Mr Biddulph's?"

Cecilia, half dead with shame and vexation, stammered out, "No, no—I believe not,—I can't tell;—I have not a moment to spare."

And then, at last, she got Mrs Charlton out of the room, and into the chaise. But thither, before she could drive off, she was followed by Mr Gosport, who gravely came to offer his advice that she would immediately lodge an information at the Public-office in Bow-street, that a very suspicious looking man had been observed loitering in those parts, who appeared to harbour most dangerous designs against her person and property.

Cecilia was too much confounded to rally or reply, and Mr Gosport returned to his party with his speech unanswered.

The rest of the journey was without any new casualty, for late as it was, they escaped being robbed: but neither robbers nor new casualties were wanting to make it unpleasant to Cecilia; the incidents which had already happened sufficed for that purpose; and the consciousness of being so generally betrayed, added to the delay of her recantation, prepared her for nothing but mortifications to herself, and conflicts with Delvile the most bitter and severe.

It was near ten o'clock before they arrived in Pall-Mall. The house to which Delvile had

had given directions was easily found, and the servant sent forward had prepared the people of it for their reception.

In the cruellest anxiety and trepidation, Cecilia then counted every moment till Delvile came. She planned an apology for her conduct with all the address of which she was mistress, and determined to bear his disappointment and indignation with firmness; yet the part she had to act was both hard and artificial; she sighed to have it over, and repined she must have it at all.

The instant there was a knock at the door, she flew out upon the stairs to listen; and hearing his well-known voice enquiring for the ladies who had just taken the lodgings, she ran back to Mrs Charlton, saying, "Ah, madam, assist me I entreat! for now must I merit, or forfeit your esteem for-ever."

"Can you pardon," cried Delvile, as he entered the room, "an intrusion which was not *in our bond?* But how could I wait till to-morrow, when I knew you were in town to-night?"

He then made his compliments to Mrs Charlton, and, after enquiring how she had borne her journey, turned again to Cecilia, whose uneasy sensations he saw but too plainly in her countenance: "Are you angry," cried he, anxiously, "that I have ventured to come hither to-night?"

"No,"

"No," answered she, struggling with all her feelings for composure; "what we wish is easily excused; and I am glad to see you to night, because otherwise—"

She hesitated; and Delvile, little imagining why, thanked her in the warmest terms for her condescension. He then related how he had been tormented by Morrice, enquired why Mr Monckton had not accompanied her, and what could possibly have induced her to make her journey so late, or, with so large a party, to be walking upon the high road instead of hastening to London.

"I wonder not," answered she, more steadily, "at your surprise, though I have now no time to lessen it. You have never, I find, received my letter?"

"No," cried he, much struck by her manner; "was it to forbid our meeting till to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" she repeated expressively, "no; it was to forbid—"

Here the door was suddenly opened, and Morrice burst into the room.

The dismay and astonishment of Delvile at sight of him, could only be equalled by the confusion and consternation of Cecilia; but Morrice, perceiving neither, abruptly called out, "Miss Beverley, I quite beg your pardon for coming so late, but you must know—" then stopping short upon seeing Delvile, "Good lord," he exclaimed, "if here

here is not our *gentleman spy!* Why, Sir, you have not spared the spur! I left you galloping off quite another way."

" However that may be, Sir," cried Delvile, equally enraged at the interruption and the observation, " you did not, I presume, wait upon Miss Beverley to talk of *me*?"

" No, Sir," answered he, lightly, " for I had told her all about you at the inn. Did not I, Miss Beverley? Did not I tell you I was sure it was Mr Delvile that was dodging us about so? Though I believe, Sir, you thought I had not found you out?"

" And pray, young man," said Mrs Charlton, much offended by this familiar intrusion, " how did you find *us* out?"

" Why, ma'am, by the luckiest accident in the world! Just as I was riding into town, I met the returned chaise that brought you? and I knew the postilion very well, as I go that road pretty often: so, by the merest chance in the world, I saw him by the light of the moon. And then he told me where he had set you down."

" And pray, Sir," again asked Mrs Charlton, " what was your reason for making the enquiry?"

" Why, ma'am, I had a little favour to ask of Miss Beverley, that made me think I would take the liberty to call."

" And was this time of night, Sir," she returned, " the only one you could choose for that purpose?"

" Why,

" Why, ma'am, I'll tell you how that was ; I did not mean to have called till to-morrow morning ; but as I was willing to know if the postilion had given me a right direction, I knocked one soft little knock at the door, thinking you might be gone to bed after your journey, merely to ask if it was the right house; but when the servant told me there was a gentleman with you already, I thought there would be no harm in just stepping for a moment up stairs."

" And what, Sir," said Cecilia, whom mingled shame and vexation had hitherto kept silent, " is your business with me ?"

" Why, ma'am, I only just called to give you a direction to a most excellent dog-doctor, as we call him, that lives at the corner of—"

" A dog-doctor, Sir ?" repeated Cecilia, " and what have I to do with any such direction ?"

" Why you must know, ma'am, I have been in the greatest concern imaginable about that accident which happened to me with the poor little dog, and so,—"

" What little dog, Sir ?" cried Delvile, who now began to conclude he was not sober, " do you know what you are talking of ?"

" Yes, Sir, for it was that very little dog you made me drop out of my arms, by which means he broke his other leg."

" I made

"*I made you drop him?*" cried Delvile, angrily, "I believe, Sir, you had much better call some other time; it does not appear to me that you are in a proper situation for remaining here at present."

"Sir, I shall be gone in an instant," answered Morrice; "I merely wanted to beg the favour of Miss Beverley to tell that young lady that owned the dog, that if she will carry him to this man, I am sure he will make a cure of him."

"Come, Sir," said Delvile, convinced now of his ineptitude, "if you please we will walk away together."

"I don't mean to take *you* away, Sir," said Morrice, looking very significantly, "for I suppose you have not rode so hard to go so soon! but as to me, I'll only write the direction, and be off.'

Delvile, amazed and irritated at so many following specimens of ignorant assurance, would not, in his present eagerness, have scrupled turning him out of the house, had he not thought it imprudent, upon such an occasion, to quarrel with him, and improper, at so late an hour, to be left behind: he therefore only, while he was writing the direction told Cecilia, in a low voice, that he would get rid of him and return in an instant.

They then went together; leaving Cecilia in an agony of distress surpassing all she had hitherto experienced. "Ah, Mrs Charlton,"

ton," she cried, " what refuge have I now from ridicule, or perhaps disgrace ! Mr Delvile has been detected watching me in disguise ! he has been discovered at this late hour meeting me in private ! The story will reach his family with all the hyperbole of exaggeration ; — how will his noble mother disdain me ! how cruelly shall I sink before the severity of her eye ! "

Mrs Charlton tried to comfort her, but the effort was vain, and she spent her time in the bitterest repining till eleven o'clock. Delvile's not returning then added wonder to her sadness, and the impropriety of his returning at all so late, grew every instant more glaring.

At last, though in great disturbance, and evidently much ruffled in his temper, he came : " I feared," he cried, " I had passed the time for admittance, and the torture I have suffered from being detained has almost driven me wild. I have been in misery to see you again, — your looks, your manner, — the letter you talk of, — all have filled me with alarm ; and though I know not what it is I have to dread, I find it impossible to rest a moment without some explanation. Tell me, then, why you seem thus strange and thus depressed ? Tell me what that letter was to forbid ? Tell me any thing, and every thing, but that you repent your condescension."

" That

"That letter," said Cecilia, "would have explained to you all. I scarce know how to communicate its contents; yet I hope you will hear with patience what I acknowledge I have resolved upon only from necessity. That letter was to tell you that to-morrow we must not meet;—it was to prepare you, indeed, for our meeting, perhaps, never more!"

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed he, starting, "what is it you mean?"

"That I have made a promise too rash to be kept; that you must pardon me if, late as it is, I retract, since I am convinced it was wrong, and must be wretched in performing it."

Confounded and dismayed, for a moment he continued silent, and then passionately called out, "Who has been with you to defame me in your opinion?—Who has barbarously wronged my character since I left you last Monday? Mr Monckton received me coldly, has he injured me in your esteem? Tell, tell me but to whom I owe this change, that my vindication, if it restores not your favour, may at least make you cease to blush that once I was honoured with some share of it!"

"It wants not to be restored," said Cecilia, with much softness, "since it has never been alienated. Be satisfied that I think of you as I thought when we last parted, and generously forbear to reproach me, when I assure you I am

am actuated by principles which you ought not to disapprove."

" And are you then, unchanged?" cried he, more gently, " and is your esteem for me still—"

" I thought it justice to say so once," cried she hastily interrupting him, " but exact from me nothing more. It is too late for us now to talk any longer; to-morrow you may find my letter at Mrs Roberts's, and that, short as it is, contains my resolution and its cause."

" Never," cried he vehemently, " can I quit you without knowing it! I would not linger till to-morrow in this suspense to be master of the universe!"

" I have told it you, Sir, already: whatever is clandestine carries a consciousness of evil, and so repugnant do I find it to my disposition and opinions, that till you give me back the promise I so unworthily made, I must be a stranger to peace, because at war with my own actions and myself."

" Recover, then, your peace," cried Delvile, with much emotion, " for I here acquit you of all promise! —to fetter, to compel you, were too inhuman to afford me any happiness. Yet hear me, dispassionately hear me, and deliberate a moment before you resolve upon my exile. Your scruples I am not now going to combat, I grieve that they are so powerful, but I have no new arguments with which to oppose them; all I have to say, is,
that

that it is now too late for a retreat to satisfy them."

" True, Sir, and far too true! yet is it always best to do right, however tardily; always better to repent, than to grow callous in wrong."

" Suffer not, however, your delicacy for my family to make you forget what is due to yourself as well as to me: the fear of shocking you, led me just now to conceal what a greater fear now urges me to mention. The honour I have had in view is already known to many, and in a very short time there are none will be ignorant of it. That impudent young man, Morrice, had the effrontery to rally me upon my passion for you, and though I reproved him with great asperity, he followed me into a coffee-house, whither I went merely to avoid him. There I forced myself to stay, till I saw him engaged with a news-paper, and then, through various private streets and alleys, I returned hither; but judge my indignation, when, the moment I knocked at the door, I perceived him again at my side!"

" Did he then see you come in?"

" I angrily demanded what he meant by thus pursuing me; he very submissively begged my pardon, and said, he had had a notion I should come back and had therefore only followed me to see if he was right! I hesitated for an instant whether to chastise, or confide in him, but believing a few hours would make his

his impertinence immaterial, I did neither,—
the door opened, and I came in.”

He stopt; but Cecilia was too much shocked to answer him.

“ Now then,” said he, “ weigh your objections against the consequences which must follow. It is discovered I attended you in town; it will be presumed I had your permission for such attendance: to separate, therefore, now, will be to no purpose with respect to that delicacy which makes you wish it. It will be food for conjecture, for enquiry, for wonder, almost while both our names are remembered, and while to me it will bring the keenest misery in the severity of my disappointment, it will cast over your own conduct a veil of mystery and obscurity wholly subversive of that unclouded openness, that fair transparent ingenuousness, by which it has hitherto been distinguished.”

“ Alas, then,” cried she, “ how dreadfully have I erred, that whatever path I now take must lead me wrong!”

“ You overwhelm me with grief,” cried Delvile, “ by finding you thus distressed, when I had hoped—Oh, cruel Cecilia! how different to this did I hope to have met you! all your doubts settled, all your fears removed, your mind perfectly composed, and ready, reluctantly, to ratify the promise with so much sweetness accorded me!—wherenow are those hopes!—where now——”

"Why will you not begone?" cried Cecilia uneasily, "indeed it is too late to stay."

"Tell me first," cried he, with great energy, "and let good Mrs Charlton speak too,—ought not every objection to our union, however potent, to give way, without further hesitation, to the certainty that our intending it must become public? Who that hears of our meeting in London, at such a season, in such circumstances, and at such hours,——"

"And why," cried Cecilia, angrily, "do you mention them, and yet stay?"

"I *must* speak now," answered he with quickness, "or lose for ever all that is dear to me, and add to the misery of that loss, the heart-piercing reflection of having injured her whom of all the world I most love, most value, and most revere."

"And how injured?" cried Cecilia, half alarmed and half displeased: "Surely I must strangely have lived to fear now the voice of calumny?"

"If any one has ever," returned he, "so lived as to dare defy it, Miss Beverley is she: but though safe by the established purity of your character from calumny, there are other and scarce less invidious attacks, from which no one is exempt, and of which the refinement, the sensibility of your mind, will render you but the more susceptible: ridicule has shafts, and impertinence has arrows, which though against innocence they may be levelled in vain, have

have always the power of wounding tranquility."

Struck with a truth which she could not controvert, Cecilia sighed deeply, but spoke not.

"Mr Delvile is right," said Mrs Charlton, "and though your plan, my dear Cecilia, was certainly virtuous and proper, when you set out from Bury, the purpose of your journey must now be made so public, that it will no longer be judicious nor rational."

Delvile poured forth his warmest thanks for this friendly interposition, and then, strengthened by such an advocate, re-urged all his arguments with redoubled hope and spirit.

Cecilia, disturbed, uncertain, comfortless, could frame her mind to no resolution; she walked about the room, deliberated,—determined,—wavered and deliberated again.—Delvile then grew more urgent, and represented so strongly the various mortifications which must follow so tardy a renunciation of their intentions, that, terrified and perplexed, and fearing the breach of their union would now be more injurious to her than its ratification, she ceased all opposition to his arguments, and uttered no words but of solicitation that he would leave her.

"I will," cried he, "I will begone this very moment. Tell me but first you will think of what I have said, and refer me not to your letter, but deign yourself to pronounce my

doom, when you have considered if it may not be softened."

To this she tacitly consented ; and elated with fresh rising hope, he recommended his cause to the patronage of Mrs Charlton, and then, taking leave of Cecilia, "I go," he said " though I have yet a thoufand things to propose and to supplicate, and though still in a suspense that my temper knows ill how to endure; but I should rather be rendered miserable than happy, in merely over-powering your reason by entreaty. I leave you, therefore, to your own reflections; yet remember, and refuse not to remember with some compunction, that all chance, all possibility of earthly happiness for *me* depends upon your decision."

He then tore himself away.

Cecilia, shocked at the fatigue she had occasioned her good old friend, now compelled her to go to rest, and dedicated the remaining part of the night to uninterrupted deliberation.

It seemed once more in her power to be mistress of her destiny ; but the very liberty of choice she had so much coveted, now attained, appeared the most heavy of calamities ; since, uncertain even what she ought to do, she rather wished to be drawn than to lead, rather desired to be guided than to guide. She was to be responsible not only to the world but to herself for the whole of this momentous transaction,

action, and the terror of leaving either dissatisfied, made independence burthensome, and unlimited power a grievance.

The happiness or misery which awaited her resolution, were but secondary considerations in the present state of her mind ; her consent to a clandestine action she lamented as an eternal blot to her character, and the undoubted publication of that consent as equally injurious to her fame. Neither retracting nor fulfilling her engagement could now retrieve what was past, and in the bitterness of regret for the error she had committed, she thought happiness unattainable for the remainder of her life.

In this gloomy despondence passed the night, her eyes never closed, her determination never formed. Morning, however, came, and upon something to fix was indispensable.

She now, therefore, finally employed herself in briefly comparing the good with the evil of giving Delvile wholly up, or becoming his for ever.

In accepting him, she was exposed to all the displeasure of his relations, and, which affected her most, to the indignant severity of his mother : but not another obstacle could be found that seemed of any weight to oppose him.

In refusing him she was liable to the derision of the world, to sneers from strangers, and remonstrances from her friends, to becoming

a topic for ridicule, if not for slander, and an object of curiosity, if not of contempt.

The ills, therefore, that threatened her marriage, though most afflicting, were least disgraceful, and those which awaited its breach, if less serious, were more mortifying.

At length, after weighing every circumstance as well as her perturbed spirits would permit, she concluded that so late to reject him must bring misery without any alleviation, while accepting him, though followed by wrath and reproach, left some opening for future hope, and some prospect of better days.

To fulfil, therefore, her engagement was her final resolution.

C H A P. VII.

A N E V E N T.

SCARCE less unhappy in her decision than in her uncertainty, and every way dissatisfied with her situation, her views and herself, Cecilia was still so distressed and uncomfortable, when Delvile called the next morning, that he could not discover what her determination had been, and fearfully enquired his doom with hardly any hope of finding favour.

But

But Cecilia was above affectation, and a stranger to art. "I would not, Sir," she said, "keep you an instant in suspense, when I am no longer in suspense myself. I may have appeared trifling, but I have been nothing less, and you would readily exculpate me of caprice, if half the distress of my irresolution was known to you. Even now, when I hesitate no more, my mind is so ill at ease, that I could neither wonder nor be displeased should you hesitate in your turn."

" You hesitate no more?" cried he, almost breathless at the sound of those words, " and is it possible—Oh my Cecilia!—is it possible your resolution is in my favour?"

" Alas!" cried she, " how little is your reason to rejoice! a dejected and melancholy gift is all you can receive?"

" Ere I take it, then," cried he, in a voice that spoke joy, pain, and fear all at once in commotion, " tell me if your reluctance has its origin in me, that I may rather even yet relinquish you, than merely owe your hand to the selfishness of persecution?"

" Your pride," said she, half smiling, " has some right to be alarmed, though I meant not to alarm it. No! it is with myself only I am at variance, with my own weakness and want of judgment that I quarrel,—in you I have all the reliance that the highest opinion of your honour and integrity can give me."

This was enough for the warm heart of Delvile, not only to restore peace, but to awaken rapture. He was almost as wild with delight, as he had before been with apprehension, and poured forth his acknowledgements with so much fervour of gratitude, that Cecilia imperceptibly grew reconciled to herself, and before she missed her dejection, participated in his contentment.

She quitted him as soon as she had power, to acquaint Mrs Charlton with what had passed, and assist in preparing her to accompany them to the altar; while Delvile flew to his new acquaintance, Mr Singleton, the lawyer, to request him to supply the place of Mr Monckton in giving her away.

All was now hastened with the utmost expedition, and to avoid observation, they agreed to meet at the church; their desire of secrecy, however potent, never urging them to wish the ceremony should be performed in a place less awful.

When the chairs, however, came, which were to carry the two ladies thither, Cecilia trembled and hung back. The greatness of her undertaking, the hazard of all her future happiness, the disgraceful secrecy of her conduct, the expected reproaches of Mrs Delvile, and the boldness and indelicacy of the step she was about to take, all so forcibly struck, and so painfully wounded her, that

the

the moment she was summoned to set out, she again lost her resolution, and regretting the hour that ever Delvile was known to her, she sunk into a chair, and gave up her whole soul to anguish and sorrow.

The good Mrs Charlton tried in vain to console her; a sudden horror against herself had now seized her spirits, which, exhausted by long struggles, could rally no more.

In this situation shewas at length surprised by Delvile, whose uneasy astonishment that she had failed in her appointment, was only to be equalled by that with which he was struck at the sight of her tears. He demanded the cause with the utmost tenderness and apprehension; Cecilia for some time could not speak, and then, with a deep sigh “ Ah!” she cried, “ Mr Delvile! how weak are we all when unsupported by our own esteem! how feeble, how inconsistent, how changeable, when our courage has any foundation but duty!”

Delvile, much relieved by finding her sadness sprung not from any new affliction, gently reproached her breach of promise, and earnestly entreated her to repair it. “ The clergyman,” cried he, “ is waiting; I have left him with Mr Singleton in the vestry; no new objections have started, and no new obstacles have intervened; why, then torment ourselves with discussing again the old ones, which we have already considered

till every possible argument upon them is exhausted? Tranquilize, I conjure you, your agitated spirits, and if the truest tenderness, the most animated esteem, and the grate-fullest admiration, can soften your future cares, and insure your future peace, every anniversary of this day will recompense my Cecilia for every pang she now suffers!"

Cecilia, half soothed and half ashamed, finding she had in fact nothing new to say or to object, compelled herself to rise, and, penetrated by his solicitations, endeavoured to compose her mind, and promised to follow him.

He would not trust her, however, from his sight, but seizing the very instant of her renewed consent, he dismissed the chairs, and ordering a hackney-coach, preferred any risk to that of her again wavering, and insisted upon accompanying her in it himself.

Cecilia had now scarce time to breathe, before she found herself at the porch of—church. Delvile hurried her out of the carriage, and then offered his arm to Mrs Charlton. Not a word was spoken by any of the party till they went into the vestry, where Delvile ordered Cecilia a glass of water, and having hastily made his compliments to the clergyman, gave her hand to Mr Singleton, who led her to the altar.

The

The ceremony was now begun; and Cecilia, finding herself past all power of re-tracting, soon called her thoughts from wishing it, and turned her whole attention to the awful service; to which, though she listened with reverence, her full satisfaction in the object of her vows, made her listen without terror. But when the priest came to that solemn adjuration, *If any man can shew any just cause why they may not be lawfully joined together,* a conscious tear stole into her eye, and a sigh espaced from Delvile that went to her heart: but, when the priest concluded the exhortation with *let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace,* a female voice at some distance, called out in shrill accents, “I do!”

The ceremony was instantly stopt. The astonished priest immediately shut up the book to regard the intended bride and bridegroom; Delvile started with amazement to see whence the sound proceeded, and Cecilia, aghast, and struck with horror, faintly shrieked, and caught hold of Mrs Charlton.

The consternation was general, and general was the silence, though all of one accord turned round towards the place whence the voice issued: a female form at the same moment was seen rushing from a pew, who glided out of the church with the quickness of lightning.

Not a word was yet uttered, every one seemed rooted to the spot on which he stood, and regarding in mute wonder the place this form had crossed.

Delvile at length exclaimed "What can this mean?"

"Did you not know the woman, Sir?" said the clergyman.

"No, Sir, I did not even see her."

"Nor you, madam?" said he, addressing Cecilia.

"No, Sir," she answered in a voice that scarce articulated the two syllables, and changing colour so frequently, that Delvile, apprehensive she would faint, flew to her, calling out "Let me support you!"

She turned from him hastily, and still holding by Mrs Charlton, moved away from the altar.

"Whither," cried Delvile, fearfully following her, "whither are you going?"

She made not any answer; but still, though tottering as much from emotion as Mrs Charlton from infirmity, she walked on.

"Why did you stop the ceremony, Sir?" cried Delvile, impatiently speaking to the clergyman.

"No ceremony, Sir," he returned, "could proceed with such an interruption."

"It has been wholly accidental," cried he, "for we neither of us know the woman, who could not have any right or authority for the pro-

prohibition." Then yet more anxiously pursuing Cecilia, "why," he continued, "do you thus move off?—Why leave the ceremony unfinished?—Mrs Charlton, what is it you are about;—Cecilia, I beseech you return, and let the service go on?"

Cecilia, making a motion with her hand to forbid his following her, still silently proceeded, though drawing along with equal difficulty Mrs Charlton and herself.

"This is insupportable!" cried Delvile, with vehemence, "turn, I conjure you!—my Cecilia!—my wife!—why is it you thus abandon me?—Turn, I implore you, and receive my eternal vows!—Mrs Charlton, bring her back,—Cecilia, you *must* not go!"—

He now attempted to take her hand, but shrinking from histouch, in an emphatic, but low voice, she said, "Yes, Sir, I must!—an interdiction such as this!—for the world could I not brave it!"

She then made an effort to somewhat quicken her pace.

"Where," cried Delvile, half frantic, "where is this infamous woman? This wretch who has thus wantonly destroyed me!"

And he rushed out of the church in pursuit of her.

The clergyman and Mr Singleton, who had hitherto been wondering spectators, came now

now to offer their assistance to Cecilia. She declined any help for herself, but gladly accepted their services for Mrs Charlton, who, thunderstruck by all that had past, seemed almost robbed of her faculties. Mr Singleton proposed calling a hackney coach, she consented, and they stopt for it at the church porch.

The clergyman now began to enquire of the pew-opener, what she knew of the woman, who she was, and how she had got into the church? She knew of her, she answered, nothing, but that she had come in to early prayers, and she supposed she had hid herself in a pew when they were over, as she had thought the church entirely empty.

A hackney coach now drew up, and while the gentlemen were assisting Mrs Charlton into it, Delvile returned.

"I have pursued and enquired," cried he, "in vain, I can neither discover nor hear of her.—But what is all this? Whither are you going?—What does this coach do here?—Mrs Charlton, why do you get into it?—Cecilia, what are you doing?"

Cecilia turned away from him in silence. The shock she had received, took from her all power of speech, while amazement and terror deprived her even of relief from tears. She believed Delvile to blame, though she knew not in what, but the obscurity of her fears

fears served only to render them more dreadful.

She was now getting into the coach herself, but Delvile, who could neither brook her displeasure, nor endure her departure, forcibly caught her hand, and called out " You are *mine*, you are my *wife*!—I will part with you no more, and go whithersoever you will, I will follow and claim you!"

" Stop me not!" cried she, impatiently, though faintly, " I am sick, I am ill already,—if you detain me any longer, I shall be unable to support myself!"

" Oh then rest on *me*!" cried he, still holding her; " rest but upon me till the ceremony is over!—you will drive me to despair and to madneſs if you leave me in this barbarous manner!"

A croud now began to gather, and the words bride and bridegroom reached the ears of Cecilia; who half dead with shame, with fear, and with distrefſs, hastily ſaid " you are determined to make me miserable!" and ſnatching away her hand, which Delvile at thoſe words could no longer hold, ſhe threw herſelf into the carriage.

Delvile, however, jumped in after her, and with an air of authority ordered the coachman to Pall-Mall, and then drew up the glaſſes, with a look of fiercenefs at the mob.

Cecilia

Cecilia had neither spirits nor power to resist him ; yet, offended by his violence, and shocked to be thus publicly pursued by him, her looks spoke a resentment far more mortifying than any verbal reproach.

"Inhuman Cecilia!" cried he, passionately, "to desert me at the very altar!—to cast me off at the instant the most sacred rites were uniting us ! and then thus to look at me ! —to treat me with this disdain at a time of such distraction!—to scorn me thus injuriously at the moment you unjustly abandon me!—"

"To how dreadful a scene," said Cecilia, recovering from her consternation, "have you exposed me ! to what shame, what indignity, what irreparable disgrace!?"

"Oh, heaven!" cried he with horror, "if any crime, any offence of mine has occasioned this fatal blow, the whole world holds not a wretch so culpable as myself, nor one who will sooner allow the justice of your rigour ! my veneration for you has ever equalled my affection, and could I think it was through *me* you have suffered any indignity, I should soon abhor myself as you seem to abhor me. But what is it I have done ? How have I thus incensed you ! By what action, by what guilt have I incurred this displeasure ?"

"Whence," cried she, "came that voice which still vibrates in my ear ? The prohibition could not be on *my* account, since none

to

to whom I am known have either right or interest in even wishing it."

" What an inference is this ! Over *me*, then, do you conclude this woman had any power ?"

Here they stopt at the lodgings. Delvile handed both the ladies out. Cecilia, eager to avoid his importunities, and dreadfully disturbed, hastily past him, and ran up stairs; but Mrs Charlton refused not his arm, on which she lent till they reached the drawing-room.

Cecilia then rang the bell for her servant, and gave orders that a post chaise might be sent for immediately.

Delvile now felt offended in his turn ; but supressing his vehemence, he gravely and quietly said " Determined as you are to leave me, indifferent to my peace, and incredulous of my word, deign, at least, before we part, to be more explicit in your accusation, and tell me if indeed it is possible you can suspect that the wretch who broke off the ceremony, had ever from me received provocation for such an action ?"

" I know not what to suspect," said Cecilia, " where every thing is thus involved in obscurity ; but I must own I should have some difficulty to think those words the effect of chance, or to credit that their speaker was concealed without design."

" You

" You are right, then, madam," cried he, resentfully, " to discard me ! to treat me with contempt, to banish me without repugnance, since I see you believe me capable of duplicity, and imagine I am better informed in this affair than I appear to be. You have said I shall make you miserable,—no, madam, no ! your happiness and misery depend not upon one you hold so worthless !"

" On whatever they depend," said Cecilia, " I am too little at ease for discussion. I would no more be daring than superstitious, but none of our proceedings have prospered, and since their privacy has always been contrary both to my judgment and my principles, I know not how to repine at a failure I cannot think unmerited. Mrs Charlton, our chaise is coming ; you will be ready, I hope, to set off in it directly ?"

Delvile, too angry to trust himself to speak, now walked about the room, and endeavoured to calm himself : but so little was his success, that though silent till the chaise was announced, when he heard that dreaded sound, and saw Cecilia steady in her purpose of departing, he was so much shocked and afflicted, that, clasping his hands in a transport of passion and grief, he exclaimed " This, then, Cecilia, is your faith ! this is the felicity you bid me hope ! this is the recompence of my sufferings, and the performance of your engagement !"

Cecilia,

Cecilia, struck by these reproaches, turned back; but while she hesitated how to answer them, he went on. " You are insensible to my misery, and impenetrable to my entreaties; a secret enemy has had power to make me odious in your sight, though for her enmity I can assign no cause, though even her existence was this morning unknown to me! Ever ready to abandon, and most willing to condemn me, you have more confidence in a vague conjecture than in all you have observed of the whole tenour of my character. Without knowing why, you are disposed to believe me criminal; without deigning to say wherefore, you are eager to banish me your presence. Yet scarce could a consciousness of guilt itself wound me so forcibly, so keenly, as your suspecting I am guilty!"

" Again, then" cried Cecilia, " shall I subject myself to a scene of such disgrace and horror? No, never! — The punishment of my error shall at least secure its reformation. Yet if I merit your reproaches, I deserve not your regard; cease, therefore, to profess any for me, or make them no more."

" Shew but to them," cried he, " the smallest sensibility, shew but for me the most distant concern, and I will try to bear my disappointment without murmuring, and submit to your decrees as to those from which there is no appeal: but to wound without deigning even to look at what you destroy,—to shoot at random

random those arrows that are pointed with poison,—to see them fasten on the heart, and corrode its vital functions, yet look on without compunction, or turn away with cold disdain,—Oh where is the candour I thought lodged in Cecilia! where the justice, the equity, I believed a part of herself!"

"After all that has past," said Cecilia, sensibly touched by his distress, "I expected not these complaints, nor that, from me, any assurances would be wanted; yet, if it will quiet your mind, if it will better reconcile you to our separation—"

"Oh, fatal prelude!" interrupted he, "what one earth can quiet my mind that leads to our separation?—Give to me no condescension with any such view,—preserve your indifference, persevere in your coldness, triumph still in your power of inspiring those feelings you can never return,—all, every thing is more supportable than to talk of our separation!"

"Yet, how," cried she, "parted, torn asunder as we have been, how is it now to be avoided?"

"Trust in my honour! Shew me but the confidence which I will venture to say I deserve, and then will that union no longer be impeded, which in future, I am certain, will never be repented!"

"Good heaven, what a request! faith so implicit would be frenzy."

"You

" You doubt, then, my integrity ? You suspect—"

" Indeed I do not ; yet in a case of such importance, what ought to guide me but my own reason, my own conscience, my own sense of right ? Pain me not, therefore, with reproaches, distress me no more with entreaties, when I solemnly declare that no earthly consideration shall ever again make me promise you my hand, while the terror of Mrs Delvile's displeasure has possession of my heart. And now adieu."

" You give me, then, up ?"

" Be patient, I beseech you ; and attempt not to follow me ; 'tis a step I cannot permit."

" Not follow you ? And who has power to prevent me ?"

" I have, Sir, if to incur my endless resentment is of any consequence to you."

She then, with an air of determined steadiness, moved on ; Mrs Charlton, assisted by the servants, being already upon the stairs.

" O tyranny !" cried he, " what submission is it you exact !—May I not even enquire into the dreadful mystery of this morning ?"

" Yes, certainly."

" And may I not acquaint you with it, should it be discovered ?"

" I shall not be sorry to hear it. Adieu."

She was now half way down the stairs ; when, losing all forbearance, he hastily flew after her, and endeavouring to stop her, called

out

out, "If you do not hate and detest me,—if I am not loathsome and abhorrent to you, O quit me not thus insensiblē!—Cecilia! my beloved Cecilia!—speak to me, at least, one word of less severity! Look at me once more, and tell me we part not for-ever!"

Cecilia then turned round, and while a starting tear shewed her sympathetic distress, said, "Why will you thus oppose me with entreaties I ought not to gratify?—Have I not accompanied you to the altar,—and can you doubt what I have thought of you?"

"Have thought?—Oh, Cecilia!—is it then all over?"

"Pray suffer me to go quietly, and fear not I shall go too happily! Suppress your own feelings, rather than seek to awaken mine. Alas! there is little occasion!—Oh Mr Delvile! were our connexion opposed by no duty, and repugnant to no friends, were it attended by no impropriety, and carried on with no necessity of disguise,—you would not thus charge me with indifference, you would not suspect me of insensibility,—Oh no! the choice of my heart would then be its glory, and all I now blush to feel, I should openly and with pride acknowledge!"

She then hurried to the chaise, Delvile pursuing her with thanks and blessings, and gratefully assuring her, as he handed her into it, that he would obey all her injunctions, and not even attempt to see her, till he could bring her

her some intelligence concerning the morning's transaction.

The chaise then drove off.

C H A P. VIII.

A CONSTERNATION.

THE journey was melancholy and tedious : Mrs Charlton, extremely fatigued by the unusual hurry and exercise both of mind and body which she had lately gone through, was obliged to travel very slowly, and to lie upon the road. Cecilia, however, was in no haste to proceed : she was going to no one she wished to see, she was wholly without expectation of meeting with any thing that could give her pleasure. The unfortunate expedition in which she had been engaged, left her now nothing but regret, and only promised her in future sorrow and mortification.

Mrs Charlton, after her return home, still continued ill, and Cecilia, who constantly attended her, had the additional affliction of imputing her indisposition to herself. Every thing she thought conspired to punish the error she had committed ; her proceedings were discovered, tho' her motives were unknown ;
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the Delvile family could not fail to hear of her enterprize, and while they attributed it to her temerity, they would exult in its failure: but chiefly hung upon her mind the unaccountable prohibition of her marriage. Whence that could proceed she was wholly without ability to divine, yet her surmises were not more fruitless than various. At one moment she imagined it some frolic of Morrice, at another some perfidy of Monckton, and at another an idle and unmeaning trick of some stranger to them all. But none of these suppositions carried with them any air of probability; Morrice, even if he had watched their motions and pursued them to the church, which his inquisitive impertinence made by no means impossible, could yet hardly have had either time or opportunity to engage any woman in so extraordinary an undertaking; Mr Monckton, however averse to the connection, she considered as a man of too much honour to break it off in a manner so alarming and disgraceful; and mischief so wanton in any stranger, seemed to require a share of unfeeling effrontery, which could fall to the lot of so few as to make this suggestion unnatural and incredible.

Sometimes she imagined that Delvile might formerly have been affianced to some woman, who, having accidentally discovered his intentions, took this desperate method of rendering them abortive: but this was a short-lived thought,

and speedily gave way to her esteem for his general character, and her confidence in the firmness of his probity.

All, therefore was dark and mysterious; conjecture was baffled, and meditation was useless. Her opinions were unfixed, and her heart was miserable; she could only be steady in believing Delvile as unhappy as herself, and only find consolation in believing him, also, as blameless.

Three days passed thus, without incident or intelligence; her time wholly occupied in attending Mrs Charlton; her thoughts all engrossed upon her own situation: but upon the fourth day she was informed that a lady was in the parlour, who desired to speak with her.

She presently went down stairs,—and, upon entering the room, perceived Mrs Delvile!

Seized with astonishment and fear, she stopt short, and, looking aghast, held by the door, robbed of all power to receive so unexpected and unwelcome a visitor, by an internal sensation of guilt, mingled with a dread of discovery and reproach.

Mrs Delvile, addressing her with the coldest politeness, said, “I fear I have surprized you; I am sorry I had not time to acquaint you of my intention to wait upon you.”

Cecilia then, moving from the door, faintly answered, “I cannot, madam, but be ho-

noured by your notice, whenever you are pleased to confer it."

They then sat down ; Mrs Delvile preserving an air the most formal and distant, and Cecilia half finking with apprehensive dismay.

After a short and ill-boding silence, "I mean not," said Mrs Delvile, "to embarrass or distress you ; I will not, therefore, keep you in suspense of the purport of my visit. I come not to make enquiries, I come not to put your sincerity to any trial, nor to torture your delicacy ; I dispense with all explanation, for I have not one doubt to solve : I *know* what has passed, I *know* that my son loves you."

Not all her secret alarm, nor all the perturbation of her fears, had taught Cecilia to expect so direct an attack, nor enabled her to bear the shock of it with any composure : she could not speak, she could not look at Mrs Delvile ; she arose, and walked to the window, without knowing what she was doing.

Here, however, her distress was not likely to diminish ; for the first sight she saw was Fidele, who barked, and jumped up at the window to lick her hands.

"Good God ! Fidele here !" exclaimed Mrs Delvile, amazed.

Cecilia, totally overpowered, covered her glowing face with both her hands, and sunk into a chair.

Mrs Delvile for a few minutes was silent ; and then, following her, said, "Imagine not I

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am making any discovery, nor suspect me of any design to develope your sentiments. That Mortimer could love in vain I never believed ; that Miss Beverley, possessing so much merit, could be blind to it in another, I never thought possible. I mean not, therefore, to solicit any account or explanation, but merely to beg your patience while I talk to you myself, and your permission to speak to you with openness and truth."

Cecilia, though relieved by this calmness from all apprehension of reproach, found in her manner a coldness that convinced her of the loss of her affection, and in the introduction to her business a solemnity that assured her what she should decree would be unalterable. She uncovered her face to shew her respectful attention, but she could not raise it up, and could not utter a word.

Mrs Delvile then seated herself next her, and gravely continued her discourse.

" Miss Beverley, however little acquainted with the state of our family affairs, can scarcely have been uninformed that a fortune such as hers seems almost all that family can desire ; nor can she have failed to observe, that her merit and accomplishments have no where been more felt and admired : the choice therefore of Mortimer she could not doubt would have our sanction, and when she honoured his proposals with her favour, she might na-

naturally conclude she gave happiness and pleasure to all his friends."

Cecilia, superior to accepting a palliation of which she felt herself undeferving, now lifted up her head, and forcing herself to speak, said "No, madam, I will not deceive you, for I have never been deceived myself: I presumed not to expect your approbation,—though in missing it I have for ever lost my own!"

"Has Mortimer, then," cried she with eagerness, "been strictly honourable? has he neither beguiled nor betrayed you?"

"No, madam," said she, blushing, "I have nothing to reproach him with."

"Then he is indeed my son!" cried Mrs Delvile, with emotion; "had he been treacherous to you, while disobedient to us, I had indisputably renounced him."

Cecilia, who now seemed the only culprit, felt herself in a state of humiliation not to be borne; she collected, therefore, all her courage, and said, "I have cleared Mr Delvile; permit me, madam, now, to say something for myself."

"Certainly; you cannot oblige me more than by speaking without disguise."

"It is not in the hope of regaining your good opinion,—that, I see, is lost!"—but merely—"

"No, not lost," said Mrs Delvile, "but if once it was yet higher, the fault was my own, in

in indulging an expectation of perfection to which human nature is perhaps unequal."

Ah, then, thought Cecilia, all is over! the contempt I so much feared is incurred, and though it may be softened, it can never be removed!

" Speak, then, and with sincerity," she continued, " all you wish me to hear, and then grant me your attention in return to the purpose of my present journey."

" I have little, madam," answered the depressed Cecilia, " to say; you tell me you already know all that has past; I will not, therefore, pretend to take any merit from revealing it: I will only add, that my consent to this transaction has made me miserable almost from the moment I gave it; that I meant and wished to retract as soon as reflection pointed out to me my error, and that circumstances the most perverse, not blindness to propriety, nor stubborness in wrong, led me to make, at last, that fatal attempt, of which the recollection, to my last hour, must fill me with regret and shame."

" I wonder not," said Mrs Delvile, " that in a situation where delicacy was so much less requisite than courage, Miss Beverley should feel herself distressed and unhappy. A mind such as hers could never err with impunity; and it is solely from a certainty of her innate sense of right, that I venture to wait upon her now, and that I have any hope to influence

her upon whose influence alone our whole family must in future depend. Shall I now proceed, or is there any thing you wish to say first?"

" No, madam, nothing."

" Hear me, then, I beg of you, with no predetermination to disregard me, but with an equitable resolution to attend to reason, and a candour that leaves an opening to conviction. Not easy, indeed, is such a task, to a mind pre-occupied with an intention to be guided by the dictates of inclination,—"

" You wrong me, indeed, madam!" interrupted Cecilia, greatly hurt, " my mind harbours no such intention, it has no desire but to be guided by duty, it is wretched with a consciousness of having failed in it! I pine, I sicken to recover my own good opinion; I should then no longer feel unworthy of yours; and whether or not I might be able to regain it, I should at least lose this cruel depression that now sinks me in your presence!"

" To regain it," said Mrs Delvile, " were to exercise but half your power, which at this moment enables you, if such is your wish, to make me think of you more highly than one human being ever thought of another. Do you condescend to hold this worth your while?"

Cecilia started at the question; her heart beat quick with struggling passions; she saw the

the sacrifice which was to be required, and her pride, her affronted pride, arose high to anticipate the rejection ; but the design was combated by her affections, which opposed the indignant rashness, and told her that one hasty speech might separate her from Delvile for ever. When this painful conflict was over, of which Mrs Delvile patiently waited the issue, she answered, with much hesitation, “ To regain your good opinion, madam, greatly, truly as I value it,—is what I now scarcely dare hope.”

“ Say not so,” cried she, “ since, if you hope, you cannot miss it. I purpose to point out to you the means to recover it, and to tell you how greatly I shall think myself your debtor if you refuse not to employ them.”

She stopt ; but Cecilia hung back ; fearful of her own strength, she dared venture at no professions ; yet, how either to support, or dispute her compliance, she dreaded to think.

“ I come to you, then,” Mrs Delvile solemnly resumed, “ in the name of Mr Delvile, and in the name of our whole family ; a family as ancient as it is honourable, as honourable as it is ancient. Consider me as its representative, and hear in me its common voice, common opinion, and common address.

“ My son, the supporter of our house, the sole guardian of its name, and the heir of

our united fortunes, has selected you, we know, for the lady of his choice, and so fondly has fixed upon you his affections, that he is ready to relinquish us all in preference to subduing them. To yourself alone, then, can we apply, and I come to you——”

“ O, hold, madam, hold !” interrupted Cecilia, whose courage now revived from resentment, “ I know what you would say ; you come to tell me of your disdain ; you come to reproach my presumption, and to kill me with your contempt ! There is little occasion for such a step ; I am depressed, I am self-condemned already ; spare me, therefore, this insupportable humiliation, wound me not with your scorn, oppress me not with your superiority ! I aim at no competition, I attempt no vindication, I acknowledge my own littleness as readily as you can despise it, and nothing but indignity could urge me to defend it !

“ Believe me,” said Mrs Delvile, “ I meant not to hurt or offend you, and I am sorry if I have appeared to you either arrogant or assuming. The peculiar and perilous situation of my family has perhaps betrayed me into offensive expressions, and made me guilty myself of an ostentation which in others has often disgusted me. Ill, indeed, can we any of us bear the test of experiment, when tried upon those subjects which call forth our particular propensities. We may strive to be disinterested, we may struggle to be impartial, but self

self will still predominate, still shew us the imperfection of our natures, and the narrowness of our souls. Yet acquit me, I beg, of any intentional insolence, and imagine not that in speaking highly of my own family, I mean to depreciate yours: on the contrary, I know it to be respectable; I know, too, that were it the lowest in the kingdom, the first might envy it that it gave birth to such a daughter."

Cecilia, somewhat soothed by this speech, begged her pardon for having interrupted her, and she proceeded.

" To your family, then, I assure you, whatever may be the pride of our own, *you* being its offspring, we would not object. With your merit we are all well acquainted, your character has our highest esteem, and your fortune exceeds even our most sanguine desires. Strange at once and afflicting! that not all these requisites for the satisfaction of prudence, nor all these allurements for the gratification of happiness, can suffice to fulfil or to silence the claims of either! There are yet other demands to which we must attend, demands which ancestry and blood call upon us aloud to ratify! Such claimants are not to be neglected with impunity; they assert their rights with the authority of prescription, they forbid us alike either to bend to inclination, or stoop to interest, and from generation to generation their injuries will call out for re-

dress, should their noble and long unsullied name be voluntarily consigned to oblivion."

Cecilia, extremely struck by these words, scarce wondered, since so strong and so established were her opinions, that the obstacle to her marriage, though but one, should be considered as insuperable.

" Not, therefore, to *your* name are we averse," she continued, " but simply to our own more partial. To sink that, indeed, in *any* other, were base and unworthy:—what, then, must be the shock of my disappointment, should Mortimer Delvile, the darling of my hopes, the last survivor of his house, in whose birth I rejoiced as the promise of its support, in whose accomplishments I gloried, as the revival of its lustre,—should *he*, should *my* son be the first to abandon it! to give up the name he seemed born to make live, and to cause in effect its utter annihilation!—Oh how should I know my son when an alien to his family! how bear to think I had cherished in my bosom the betrayer of its dearest interests, the destroyer of its very existence!"

Cecilia, scarce more afflicted than offended now hastily answered, " Not for me, madam, shall he commit this crime, not on *my* account shall he be reprobated by his family! Think of him, therefore, no more, with any reference to me, for I would not be the cause of unworthiness or guilt in him to be mistress of the universe!"

" Nobly

"Nobly said!" cried Mrs Delvile, her eyes sparkling with joy, and her cheeks glowing with pleasure, "now again do I know Miss Beverley! now again see the refined, the excellent young woman, whose virtues taught me to expect the renunciation even of her own happiness, when found to be incompatible with her duty!"

Cecilia now trembled and turned pale; she scarce knew herself what she had said, but, she found by Mrs Delvile's construction of her words, they had been regarded as her final relinquishing of her son. She ardently wished to quit the room before she was called upon to confirm the sentence, but she had not courage to make the effort, nor to rise, speak, or move.

"I grieve, indeed," continued Mrs Delvile, whose coldness and austerity were changed into mildness and compassion, "at the necessity I have been under to draw from you a concurrence so painful; but no other resource was in my power. My influence with Mortimer, whatever it may be, I have not any right to try, without obtaining your previous consent, since I regard him myself as bound to you in honour, and only to be released by your own virtuous desire. I will leave you, however, for my presence, I see, is oppressive to you. Farewell; and when you *can* forgive me, I think you *will*."

"I have nothing, madam," said Cecilia coldly, "to forgive; you have only asserted your own dignity, and I have nobody to blame but myself, for having given you occasion."

"Alas," cried Mrs Delvile, "if worth and nobleness of soul on your part, if esteem and tenderest affection on mine, were all which that dignity which offends you requires, how should I crave the blessing of such a daughter! how rejoice in joining my son to excellence so like his own, and ensuring his happiness while I stimulated his virtue!"

"Do not talk to me of affection, madam," said Cecilia, turning away from her, "whatever you had for me is past,—even your esteem is gone,—you may pity me, indeed, but your pity is mixed with contempt, and I am not so abject as to find comfort from exciting it."

"O little," cried Mrs Delvile, looking at her with the utmost tenderness, "little do you see the state of my heart, for never have you appeared to me so worthy as at this moment! In tearing you from my son, I partake all the wretchedness I give, but your own sense of duty must something plead for the strictness with which I act up to mine."

She then moved towards the door.

"Is your carriage, madam," said Cecilia, struggling to disguise her inward anguish under an appearance of sullenness, "in waiting?"

Mrs

Mrs Delvile then came back, and holding out her hand, while her eyes glistened with tears, said, “To part from you thus frigidly, while my heart so warmly admires you, is almost more than I can endure. Oh, gentlest Cecilia! condemn not a mother who is impelled to this severity, who performing what she holds to be her duty, thinks the office her bitterest misfortune, who foresees in the rage of her husband, and the resistance of her son, all the misery of domestic contention, and who can only secure the honour of her family by destroying its peace!—You will not, then, give me your hand?—”

Cecilia, who had affected not to see that she waited for it, now coldly put it out, distantly courtesying, and seeking to preserve her steadiness by avoiding to speak. Mrs DeVile took it, and as she repeated her adieu, affectionately pressed it to her lips; Cecilia, starting, and breathing short, from encreasing yet smothered agitation, called out, “Why, why this condescension?—pray,—I entreat you, madam!—”

“Heaven bless you, my love!” said Mrs Delvile, dropping a tear upon the hand she still held, “heaven bless you, and restore the tranquility you so nobly deserve!”

“Ah, madam!” cried Cecilia, vainly striving to repress any longer the tears which now forced their way down her cheeks, “why will you break my heart with this kindness! why will

will you still compel me to love,—when now I almost wish to hate you!—”

“ No, hate me not,” said Mrs Delvile, kissing from her cheeks the tears that watered them, “ hate me not, sweetest Cecilia, though in wounding your gentle bosom, I am almost detestable to myself. Even the cruel scene which awaits me with my son will not more deeply afflict me. But adieu,—I must now prepare for him!”

She then left the room : but Cecilia, whose pride had no power to resist this tenderness, ran hastily after her, saying, “ Shall I not see you again, madam ?”

“ You shall yourself decide,” answered she ; “ if my coming will not give you more pain than pleasure, I will wait upon you whenever you please.”

Cecilia sighed and paused ; she knew not what to desire, yet rather wished any thing to be done, than quietly to sit down to uninterrupted reflection.

“ Shall I postpone quitting this place,” continued Mrs Delvile, “ till to-morrow morning, and will you admit me this afternoon, should I call upon you again ?”

“ I should be sorry,” said she, still hesitating, “ to detain you,—”

“ You will rejoice me,” cried Mrs Delvile, “ by bearing me in your sight.”

And she then went into her carriage.

Cecilia,

Cecilia, unfitted to attend her old friend, and unequal to the task of explaining to her the cruel scene in which she had just been engaged, then hastened to her own apartment. Her hitherto stifled emotions broke forth in tears and repinings: her fate was finally determined, and its determination was not more unhappy than humiliating: she was openly rejected by the family whose alliance she was known to wish; she was compelled to refuse the man of her choice, though satisfied his affections were her own. A misery so peculiar she found hard to support, and almost bursting with conflicting passions, her heart alternately swelled from offended pride, and sunk from disappointed tenderness.

C H A P. IX.

A PERTURBATION.

C E C I L I A was still in this tempestuous state, when a message was brought her that a gentleman was belowstairs, who begged to have the honour of seeing her. She concluded he was Delvile, and the thought of meeting him merely to communicate what must so bitterly afflict him, redoubled her distress,

tress, and she went down in an agony of perturbation and sorrow.

He met her at the door, where, before he could speak, "Mr Delvile," she cried, in a hurrying manner, "why will you come? Why will you thus insist upon seeing me, in defiance of every obstacle, and in contempt of my prohibition?"

"Good heavens," cried he, amazed, "whence this reproach? Did you not permit me to wait upon you with the result of my enquiries? Had I not your consent—but why do you look thus disturbed?—Your eyes are red,—you have been weeping.—Oh, my Cecilia! have *I* any share in your sorrow?—Those tears, which never flow weakly, tell me, have they—has *one* of them been shed upon my account?"

"And what," cried she, "has been the result of your enquiries?—Speak quick, for I wish to know,—and in another instant I must be gone."

"How strange," cried the astonished Delvile, "is this language! how strange are these looks! What new has come to pass? Has any fresh calamity happened? Is there yet some evil which I do not expect?"

"Why will you not answer first?" cried she; "when *I* have spoken, you will perhaps be less willing."

"You terrify, you shock, you amaze me! What dreadful blow awaits me? For what horror are you preparing me!—That which I have

I have just experienced, and which tore you from me even at the foot of the altar, still remains inexplicable, still continues to be involved in darkness and mystery; for the wretch who separated us I have never been able to discover."

"Have you procured, then, no intelligence?"

"No, none; though since we parted I have never rested a moment."

"Make, then, no further enquiry, for now all explanation would be useless. That we *were* parted, we know, though *why* we cannot tell: but that again we shall ever meet—"

She stopt; her streaming eyes cast upwards, and a deep sigh bursting from her heart.

"Oh what," cried Delvile, endeavouring to take her hand, which she hastily withdrew from him, "what does this mean? loveliest, dearest Cecilia, my betrothed, my affianced wife! why flow those tears which agony only can wring from you?—Why refuse me that hand which so lately was the pledge of your faith? Am I not the same Delvile to whom so few days since you gave it? Why will you not open to him your heart? Why thus distrust his honour, and repulse his tenderness? Oh why, giving him such exquisite misery, refuse him the smallest consolation?"

"What consolation," cried the weeping Cecilia, "can I give?" Alas! it is not, perhaps, *you* who most want it!—"

Here

Here the door was opened by one of the Miss Charltons, who came into the room with a message from her grand-mother, requesting to see Cecilia. Cecilia, ashamed of being thus surprised with Devile, and in tears, waited not either to make any excuse to him, or any answer to Miss Charlton, but instantly hurried out of the room ;—not, however, to her old friend, whom now less than ever she could meet, but to her own apartment, where a very short indulgence of grief was succeeded by the severest examination of her own conduct.

A retrospection of this sort rarely brings much subject of exultation, when made with the rigid sincerity of secret impartiality : so much stronger is our reason than our virtue, so much higher our sense of duty than our performance !

All she had done she now repented, all she had said she disapproved ; her conduct, seldom equal to her notions of right, was now infinitely below them, and the reproaches of her judgment made her forget for a while the afflictions which had misled it.

The sorrow to which she had openly given way in the presence of Delvile, though their total separation but the moment before had been finally decreed, she considered as a weak effusion of tenderness, injurious to delicacy, and censurable by propriety. “ His power over my heart,” cried she, “ it were now, indeed, too late to conceal, but his power over my

my understanding it is time to cancel. I am not to be his,—my own voice has ratified the renunciation, and since I made it to his mother, it must never, without her consent, be invalidated. Honour, therefore, to her, and regard for myself, equally command me to fly him, till I cease to be thus affected by his sight."

When Delvile, therefore, sent up an entreaty that he might be again admitted into her presence, she returned for answer that she was not well, and could not see any body.

He then left the house, and in a few minutes she received the following note from him.

To Miss BEVERLEY.

YOU drive me from you, Cecilia, tortured with suspense, and distracted with apprehension,—you drive me from you, certain of my misery, yet leaving me to bear it as I may ! I would call you unfeeling, but that I saw you were unhappy ; I would reproach you with tyranny, but that your eyes when you quitted me were swoln with weeping ! I go, therefore, I obey the harsh mandate, since my absence is your desire, and I will shut myself up at Biddulph's till I receive your commands. Yet disdain not to reflect that every instant will seem endless, while Cecilia must appear to me unjust,

unjust, or wound my very soul by the recollection of her in sorrow.

MORTIMER DELVILE.

The mixture of fondness and resentment with which this letter was dictated, marked so strongly the sufferings and disordered state of the writer, that all the softness of Cecilia returned when she perused it, and left her not a wish but to lessen his inquietude, by assurances of unalterable regard; yet she determined not to trust herself in his sight, certain they could only meet to grieve over each other, and conscious that a participation of sorrow would but prove a reciprocation of tenderness. Calling, therefore, upon her duty to resist her inclination, she resolved to commit the whole affair to the will of Mrs Delvile, to whom, though under no promise, she now considered herself responsible. Desirous, however, to shorten the period of Delvile's uncertainty, she would not wait till the time she had appointed to see his mother, but wrote the following note to hasten their meeting.

To the Hon. Mrs DELVILE.

Madam,

Your son is now at Bury; shall I acquaint him of your arrival? or will you announce it yourself? Inform me of your desire, and I will endeavour to fulfil it. As my own agent I regard

regard myself no longer ; if, as yours, I can give pleasure, or be of service, I shall gladly receive your commands. I have the honour to be,

Madam,

Your most obedient servant,

CECILIA BEVERLEY.

When she had sent off this letter, her heart was more at ease, because reconciled with her conscience : she had sacrificed the son, she had resigned herself to the mother ; it now only remained to heal her wounded pride, by suffering the sacrifice with dignity, and to recover her tranquillity in virtue, by making the resignation without repining.

Her reflections, too, growing clearer as the mist of passion was dispersed, she recollects with confusion her cold and sullen behaviour to Mrs Delvile. That lady had but done what she had believed was her duty, and that duty was no more than she had been taught to expect from her. In the beginning of her visit, and while doubtful of its success, she had, indeed, been austere, but the moment victory appeared in view, she became tender, affectionate, and gentle. Her justice, therefore, condemned the resentment to which she had given way, and she fortified her mind for the interview which was to follow, by an

an earnest desire to make reparation both to Mrs Delvile and herself for that which was past.

In this resolution she was not a little strengthened, by seriously considering with herself the great abatement to all her possible happiness, which must have been made by the humiliating circumstance of forcing herself into a family which held all connection with her as disgraceful. She desired not to be the wife even of Delvile upon such terms, for the more she esteemed and admired him, the more anxious she became for his honour, and the less could she endure being regarded herself as the occasion of its diminution.

Now, therefore, her plan of conduct settled, with calmer spirits, though a heavy heart, she attended upon Mrs Charlton ; but fearing to lose the steadiness she had just acquired before it should be called upon, if she trusted herself to relate the decision which had been made, she besought her for the present to dispense with the account, and then forced herself into conversation upon less interesting subjects.

This prudence had its proper effect, and with tolerable tranquillity she heard Mrs Delvile again announced, and waited upon her in the parlour with an air of composure.

Not so did Mrs Delvile receive her ; she was all eagerness and emotion ; she flew to her

her the moment she appeared, and throwing her arms around her, warmly exclaimed, "Oh, charming girl! Saver of our family! preserver of our honour! How poor are words to express my admiration? how inadequate are thanks in return for such obligations as I owe you!"

" You owe me none, madam," said Cecilia, suppressing a sigh; " on *my* side will be all the obligation, if you can pardon the petulance of my behaviour this morning."

" Call not by so harsh a name," answered Mrs Delvile, " the keenness of a sensibility by which you have yourself alone been the sufferer. You have had a trial the most severe, and however able to sustain, it was impossible you should not feel it. That you should give up *any* man whose friends solicit not your alliance, your mind is too delicate to make wonderful; but your generosity in submitting, unasked, the arrangement of that resignation to those for whose interest it is made, and your high sense of honour in holding yourself accountable to *me*, though under no tie, and bound by no promise, mark a greatness of mind which calls for reverence rather than thanks, and which I never can praise half so much as I admire."

Cecilia, who received this applause but as a confirmation of her rejection, thanked her only by courtesying; and Mrs Delvile, having

ing seated herself next her, continued her speech.

" My son, you have the goodness to tell me, is here—have you seen him?"

" Yes, madam," answered she, blushing, " but hardly for a moment."

" And he knows not of my arrival?"

" No,—I believe he certainly does not.

" Sad, then, is the trial which awaits him, and heavy for me the office I must perform. Do you expect to see him again?"

" No,—yes,—perhaps—indeed I hardly"—

She stammered, and Mrs Delvile, taking her hand, said, " Tell me, Miss Beverley, *why* should you see him again?"

Cecilia was thunderstruck by this question, and, colouring yet more deeply, looked down, but could not answer.

" Consider," continued Mrs Delvile, " the *purpose* of any further meeting; your union is impossible, you have nobly consented to relinquish all thoughts of it: why then tear your own heart, and torture his, by an intercourse which seems nothing but an ill-judged invitation to fruitless and unavailing sorrow?"

Cecilia was still silent; the truth of the expostulation her reason acknowledged, but to assent to its consequence her whole heart refused.

" The

"The ungenerous triumph of little female vanity," said Mrs Delvile, "is far, I am sure, from your mind, of which the enlargement and liberality will rather find consolation from lessening than from embittering his sufferings. Speak to me, then, and tell me, honestly, judiciously, candidly tell me,—will it not be wiser and more right, to avoid rather than seek an object which can only give birth to regret? an interview which can excite no sensations but of misery and sadness?"

Cecilia then turned pale, she endeavoured to speak, but could not; she wished to comply,—yet to think she had seen him for the last time, to remember how abruptly she had parted from him, and to fear she had treated him unkindly;—these were obstacles which opposed her concurrence, though both judgment and propriety demanded it.

"Can you, then," said Mrs Delvile, after a pause, "can you wish to see Mortimer merely to behold his grief? Can you desire he should see you, only to sharpen his affliction at your loss?"

"O no!" cried Cecilia, to whom this reproof restored speech and resolution, "I am not so despicable, I am not, I hope, so unworthy!—I will be ruled by you wholly; I will commit to you every thing;—yet *once*, perhaps,—no more!—"

" Ah, my dear Miss Beverley ! to meet confessedly for *once*,—what were that but planting a dagger in the heart of Mortimer ? What were it but infusing poison into your own ?"

" If you think so, madam," said she, " I had better—I will certainly—" she sighed stammered, and stopt.

" Hear me," cried Mrs Delvile, " and rather let me try to convince than persuade you. Were there any possibility, by argument, by reflection, or even by accident, to remove the obstacles to our connection, then would it be well to meet, for then might discussion turn to account, and an interchange of sentiments be productive of some happy expedient : but here—"

She hesitated, and Cecilia, shocked and ashamed, turned away her face, and cried " I know, madam, what you would say,—here all is over ! and therefore—"

" Yet suffer me," interrupted she, " to be explicit, since we speak upon this matter now for the last time. Here, then, I say, where not ONE doubt remains, where ALL is finally, though not happily decided, what can an interview produce ? Mischief of every sort, pain, horror, and repining ! To Mortimer you may think it would be kind, and grant it to his prayers, as an alleviation of his misery ; mistaken notion ! nothing could so greatly augment it. All his passions would be raised,

all

all his prudence would be extinguished, his soul would be torn with resentment and regret, and force, only, would part him from you, when previously he knew that parting was to be eternal. To yourself—”

“ Talk not, madam, of *me*,” cried the unhappy Cecilia, “ what you say of your son is sufficient, and I will yield—”

“ Yet hear me,” proceeded she, “ and believe me not so unjust as to consider him alone; you also, would be an equal, though a less stormy sufferer. You fancy, at this moment, that once more to meet him would soothe your uneasiness, and that to take of him a farewell, would soften the pain of the separation: how false such reasoning! how dangerous such consolation! acquainted ere you meet that you were to meet him no more, your heart would be all softness and grief, and at the very moment when tenderness should be banished from your intercourse it would bear down all opposition of judgment, spirit, and dignity: you would hang upon every word, because every word would seem the last, every look, every expression would be rivetted in your memory, and his image in this parting distress would be painted upon your mind, in colours that would eat into its peace, and perhaps never be erased.”

“ Enough, enough,” said Cecilia, “ I will not see him,—I will not even desire it!”

" Is this compliance or conviction ? Is what I have said true, or only terrifying ? "

" Both, both ! I believe, indeed, the conflict would have overpowered me.—I see you are right—and I thank you, madam, for saving me from a scene I might so cruelly have rued."

" Oh, daughter of my mind!" cried Mrs Delvile, rising and embracing her, " noble, generous, yet gentle Cecilia ! what tie, what connection, could make you more dear to me ? Wo is there like you ? Who half so excellent ? So open to reason, so ingenuous in error ! so rational ! so just ! so feeling, yet so wise !"

" You are very good," said Cecilia, with a forced serenity, " and I am thankful that your resentment for the past obstructs not your lenity for the present."

" Alas, my love, how shall I resent the past, when I ought myself to have foreseen this calamity ! and I *should* have foreseen it, had I not been informed you were engaged, and upon your engagement built our security. Else had I been more alarmed, for my own admiration would have bid me look forward to my son's. You were just, indeed, the woman he had least chance to resist, you were precisely the character to seize his very soul. To a softness the most fatally alluring, you join a dignity which rescues from their own contempt even the most humble of your admirers.

mirers. You seem born to have all the world wish your exaltation, and no part of it murmur at your superiority. Were any obstacle but this insuperable one in the way, should nobles, nay, should princes offer their daughters to my election, I would reject without murmuring the most magnificent proposals, and take in triumph to my heart my son's nobler choice!"

"Oh madam," cried Cecilia, "talk not to me thus!—speak not such flattering words!—ah, rather scorn and upbraid me, tell me you despise my character, my family and my connections,—load, load me with contempt, but do not thus torture me with approbation!"

"Pardon me, sweetest girl, if I have awakened those emotions you so wisely seek to subdue. May my son but emulate your example, and my pride in his virtue shall be the solace of my affliction for his misfortunes."

She then tenderly embraced her, and abruptly took her leave.

Cecilia had now acted her part, and acted it to her own satisfaction; but the curtain dropt when Mrs Delvile left the house, nature resumed her rights, and the sorrow of her heart was no longer disguised or repressed. Some faint ray of hope had till now broke through the gloomiest cloud of her misery, and secretly flattered her that its dis-

persion was possible, though distant: but that ray was extinct, that hope was no more; she had solemnly promised to banish Delvile from her sight, and his mother had absolutely declared that even the subject had been discussed for the last time.

Mrs Charlton, impatient of some explanation of the morning's transactions, soon sent again to beg Cecilia would come to her. Cecilia reluctantly obeyed, for she feared increasing her indisposition by the intelligence she had to communicate; she struggled, therefore, to appear to her with tolerable calmness, and in briefly relating what had passed, forbore to mingle with the narrative her own feelings and unhappiness.

Mrs Charlton heard the account with the utmost concern; she accused Mrs Delvile of severity, and even of cruelty; she lamented the strange accident by which the marriage ceremony had been stopt, and regretted that it had not again been begun, as the only means to have rendered ineffectual the present fatal interposition.

But the grief of Cecilia, however violent, induced her not to join in this regret: she mourned only the obstacle which had occasioned the separation, and not the incident which had merely interrupted the ceremony: convinced by the conversations in which she had just been engaged, of Mrs Delvile's inflexibility, she rather rejoiced than repined that

that she had put it to no nearer trial: sorrow was all she felt; for her mind was too liberal to harbour resentment against a conduct which she saw was dictated by a sense of right, and too ductile and too affectionate to remain unmoved by the personal kindness which had softened the rejection, and the many marks of esteem and regard which had shewn her it was lamented, though considered as indispensable.

How and by whom this affair had been betrayed to Mrs Delvile she knew not; but the discovery was nothing less than surprising, since, by various unfortunate accidents, it was known to so many, and since, in the horror and confusion of the mysterious prohibition to the marriage, neither Delvile nor herself had thought of even attempting to give any caution to the witnesses of that scene, not to make it known: an attempt, however, which must almost necessarily have been unavailing, as the incident was too extraordinary, and too singular to have any chance of suppression.

During this conversation, one of the servants came to inform Cecilia, that a man was below to enquire if there was no answer to the note he had brought in the forenoon.

Cecilia, greatly distressed, knew not upon what to resolve; that the patience of Delvile should be exhausted, she did not, indeed,

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wonder, and to relieve his anxiety was now almost her only wish ; she would therefore instantly have written to him, confessed her sympathy in his sufferings, and besought him to endure with fortitude an evil which was no longer to be withstood : but she was uncertain whether he was yet acquainted with the journey of his mother to Bury, and having agreed to commit to her the whole management of the affair, she feared it would be dishonourable to take any step in it without her concurrence. She returned, therefore, a message that she had yet no answer ready.

In a very few minutes Delvile called himself, and sent up an earnest request for permission to see her.

Here, at least, she had no perplexity ; an interview she had given her positive word to refuse, and therefore, without a moment's hesitation, she bid the servant inform him she was particularly engaged, and sorry it was not in her power to see any company.

In the greatest perturbation he left the house, and immediately wrote to her the following lines.

To Miss BEVERLEY.

I entreat you to see me ! if only for an instant, I entreat, I implore you to see me ! Mrs Charlton may be present — all the world,

world, if you wish it, may be present,—
but deny me not admission, I supplicate, I
conjure you !

I will call in an hour ; in that time you
may have finished your present engagement.
I will otherwise wait longer, and call again.
You will not, I think, turn me from your
door, and, till I have seen you, I can only
live in its vicinity.

M. D.

The man who brought this note, waited
not for any answer.

Cecilia read it in an agony of mind inex-
pressible : she saw, by its style, how much
Delvile was irritated, and her knowledge of
his temper made her certain his irritation
proceeded from believing himself ill-used.
She ardently wished to appease and to quiet
him, and regretted the necessity of appear-
ing obdurate and unfeeling, even more, at
that moment, than the separation itself. To
a mind priding in its purity, and animated
in its affections, few sensations can excite
keener misery, than those by which an ap-
prehension is raised of being thought worth-
less or ungrateful by the objects of our
chosen regard. To be deprived of their
society is less bitter, to be robbed of our
own tranquillity by any other means, is less
afflicting.

G 5

Yet

Yet to this it was necessary to submit, or incur the only penalty which, to such a mind, would be more severe, self-reproach: she had promised to be governed by Mrs Delvile; she had nothing, therefore, to do but obey her.

Yet to turn, as he expressed himself, from the door, a man who, but for an incident, the most incomprehensible, would now have been sole master of herself and her actions, seemed so unkind and so tyrannical, that she could not endure to be within hearing of his repulse: she begged, therefore, the use of Mrs Charlton's carriage, and determined to make a visit to Mrs Harrel till Delvile and his mother had wholly quitted Bury. She was not, indeed, quite satisfied in going to the house of Mr Arnott, but she had no time to weigh objections, and knew not any other place to which still greater might not be started.

She wrote a short letter to Mrs Delvile, acquainting her with her purpose, and its reason, and repeating her assurances, that she would be guided by her implicitly; and then, embracing Mrs Charlton, whom she left to the care of her grand-daughters, she got into a chaise, accompanied only by her maid, and one man and horse, and ordered the postillion to drive to Mr Arnott's.

BOOK VIII.

C H A P. I.

A COTTAGE.

THE evening was already far advanced, and before she arrived at the end of her little journey it was quite dark. When they came within a mile of Mr Arnott's house, the postillion, in turning too suddenly from the turnpike to the cross-road, overset the carriage. The accident, however, occasioned no other mischief than delaying their proceeding, and Cecilia and her maid were helped out of the chaise unhurt. The servants, assisted by a man who was walking upon the road, began lifting it up; and Cecilia, too busy within to be attentive to what passed without, disregarded what went forward, till she heard her footman call for help. She then hastily advanced to enquire what was the matter, and found that the passenger who had lent his aid, had, by working in the dark, unfortunately slipped his foot under one of the wheels, and so much hurt it, that without great pain he could not put it to the ground.

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Cecilia

Cecilia immediately desired that the sufferer might be carried to his own home in the chaise, while she and the maid walked on to Mr Arnott's, attended by her servant on horseback.

This little incident proved of singular service to her upon first entering the house; Mrs Harrel was at supper with her brother, and hearing the voice of Cecilia in the hall, hastened with the extrekest surprise to enquire what had occasioned so late a visit; followed by Mr Arnott, whose amazement was accompanied with a thousand other sensations too powerful for speech. Cecilia, unprepared with any excuse, instantly related the adventure she had met with on the road, which quieted their curiosity, by turning their attention to her personal safety. They ordered a room to be prepared for her, entreated her to go to rest with all speed, and postpone any further account till the next day. With this request she most gladly complied, happy to be spared the embarrassment of enquiry, and rejoiced to be relieved from the fatigue of conversation.

Her night was restless and miserable: to know how Delvile would bear her flight was never a moment from her thoughts, and to hear whether he would obey or oppose his mother was her incessant wish. She was fixt, however, to be faithful in refusing to see him, and

and at least to suffer nothing new from her own enterprise or fault.

Early in the morning Mrs Harrel came to see her. She was eager to learn why, after invitations repeatedly refused, she was thus suddenly arrived without any; and she was still more eager to talk of herself, and relate the weary life she led, thus shut up in the country, and confined to the society of her brother.

Cecilia evaded giving any immediate answer to her questions, and Mrs Harrel, happy in an opportunity to rehearse her own complaints, soon forgot that she had asked any, and, in a very short time, was perfectly, though imperceptibly, contented to be herself the only subject upon which they conversed.

But not such was the selfishness of Mr Arnott; and Cecilia, when she went down to breakfast, perceived with the utmost concern that he had passed a night as sleepless as her own. A visit so sudden, so unexpected, and so unaccountable, from an object that no discouragement could make him think of with indifference, had been a subject to him of conjecture and wonder that had revived all the hopes and fears which had lately, though still unextinguished, lain dormant. The enquiries however, which his sister had given up, he ventured not to renew, and thought himself but too happy in her presence, whatever might be the cause of her visit.

He

He perceived, however, immediately, the sadness that hung upon her mind, and his own was redoubled by the sight: Mrs Harrel, also, saw that she looked ill, but attributed it to the fatigue and fright of the preceding evening, well knowing that a similar accident would have made her ill herself, or fancy that she was so.

During breakfast, Cecilia sent for the postillion, to enquire of him how the man had fared, whose good-natured assistance in their distress had been so unfortunate to himself. He answered that he had turned out to be a day-labourer, who lived about half a mile off. And then, partly to gratify her own humanity, and partly to find any other employment for herself and friends than uninteresting conversation, she proposed that they should all walk to the poor man's habitation, and offer him some amends for the injury he had received. This was readily assented to, and the postillion directed them whither to go.

The place was a cottage, situated upon a common; they entered it without ceremony, and found a clean looking woman at work.

Cecilia enquired for her husband, and was told that he was gone out to day-labour.

"I am very glad to hear it," returned she; "I hope then he has got the better of the accident he met with last night?"

"It was not him, madam," said the woman, "met with the accident, it was John; there he is, working in the garden."

To

To the garden they all went, and saw him upon the ground, weeding.

The moment they approached he arose, and, without speaking, began to limp, for he could hardly walk, away.

"I am sorry, master," said Cecilia, "that you are so much hurt. Have you had any thing put to your foot?"

The man made no answer, but still turned away from her; a glance, however, of his eye, which the next instant he fixed upon the ground, startled her; she moved round to look at him again—and perceived Mr Belfield!

"Good God!" she exclaimed; but seeing him still retreat, she recollect ed in a moment how little he would be obliged to her for betraying him, and, suffering him to go on, turned back to her party, and led the way again into the house.

As soon as the first emotion of her surprise was over, she enquired how long *John* had belonged to this cottage, and what was his way of life.

The woman answered he had only been with them a week, and went out to day-labour with her husband.

Cecilia then, finding their stay kept him from his employment, and willing to save him the distress of being seen by Mr Arnott or Mrs Harrel, proposed their returning home. She grieved most sincerely at beholding in so melancholy an occupation a young
man

man of such talents and abilities ; she wished much to assist him, and began considering by what means it might be done, when, as they were walking from the cottage, a voice at some distance called out, " Madam ! Miss Beverley !" and, looking round, to her utter amazement she saw Belfield endeavouring to follow her.

She instantly stopt, and he advanced, his hat in his hand, and his whole air indicating he sought not to be disguised.

Surprised at this sudden change of behaviour, she then stept forward to meet him, accompanied by her friends : but when they came up to each other, she checked her desire of speaking, to leave him fully at liberty to make himself known, or keep concealed.

He bowed with a look of assumed gaiety and ease, but the deep scarlet that tinged his whole face manifested his internal confusion ; and in a voice that attempted to sound lively, though its tremulous accents betrayed uneasiness and distress, he exclaimed, with a forced smile, " Is it possible Miss Beverley can deign to notice a poor miserable day-labourer such as I am ? how will she be justified in the beau monde, when even the sight of such a wretch ought to fill her with horror ? Henceforth let hysterics be blown to the winds, and let nerves be discarded from the female vocabulary, since a lady so young and fair can stand this shock without hartshorn or fainting ! "

" I am

"I am happy," answered Cecilia, "to find your spirits so good ; yet my own, I must confess, are not raised by seeing you in this strange situation."

"My spirits!" cried he, with an air of defiance, "never were they better, never so good as at this moment. Strange as seems my situation, it is all that I wish ; I have found out, at last, the true secret of happiness ! that secret which so long I pursued in vain, but which always eluded my grasp, till the instant of despair arrived, when, slackening my pace, I gave it up as a phantom. Go from me, I cried, I will be cheated no more ! thou airy bubble ! thou fleeting shadow ! I will live no longer in thy sight, since thy beams dazzle without warming me ! Mankind seems only composed as matter for thy experiments, and I will quit the whole race, that thy delusions may be presented to me no more !"

This romantic flight, which startled even Cecilia, though acquainted with his character, gave to Mrs Harrel and Mr Arnott the utmost surprise; his appearance, and the account they had just heard of him, having by no means prepared them for such sentiments or such language.

"Is then this great secret of happiness," said Cecilia, "nothing, at last, but total seclusion from the world ?"

"No,

"No, madam," answered he, "it is labour with independence."

Cecilia now wished much to ask some explanation of his affairs, but was doubtful whether he would gratify her before Mrs Harrel and Mr Arnott, and hurt to keep him standing, though he leant upon a stick; she told him, therefore, she would at present detain him no longer, but endeavour again to see him before she quitted her friends.

Mr Arnott then interfered, and desired his sister would entreat Miss Beverley to invite whom she pleased to his house.

Cecilia thanked him, and instantly asked Belfield to call upon her in the afternoon.

"No, madam, no," cried he, "I have done with visits and society! I will not so soon break through a system with much difficulty formed, when all my future tranquillity depends upon adhering to it. The worthlessness of mankind has disgusted me with the world, and my resolution in quitting it shall be immoveable as its baseness."

"I must not venture, then," said Cecilia, "to enquire——"

"Enquire, madam," interrupted he with quickness, "what you please: there is nothing I will not answer to you,—to this lady, to this gentleman, to any and to every body.—What can I wish to conceal, where I have nothing to gain or to lose? When first, indeed, I saw you, I involuntarily shrunk; a weak shame

shame for a moment seized me, I felt fallen and debased, and I wished to avoid you; but a little recollection brought me back to my senses. And where, cried I, is the disgrace of exercising for my subsistence the strength with which I am endued? and why should I blush to lead the life which uncorrupted Nature first prescribed to man?"

" Well, then," said Cecilia, more and more interested to hear him, "if you will not visit us, will you at least permit us to return with you to some place where you can be seated?"

" I will with pleasure," cried he, "go to any place where you may be seated yourselves; but for me, I have ceased to regard accommodation or inconvenience."

They then all went back to the cottage, which was now empty, the woman being out at work.

" Will you then, Sir," said Cecilia, "give me leave to enquire whether Lord Vannelt is acquainted with your retirement, and if it will not much surprise and disappoint him?"

" Lord Vannelt," cried he, haughtily, "has no right to be surprised. I would have quitted *his* house, if no other, not even this cottage, had a roof to afford me shelter!"

" I am sorry, indeed, to hear it," said Cecilia; " I had hoped he would have known your value, and merited your regard."

" Ill-

" Ill-usage," answered he, " is as hard to relate as to be endured. There is commonly something pitiful in a complaint; and though oppression in a general sense provokes the wrath of mankind, the investigation of its minuter circumstances excites nothing but derision. Those who give the offence, by the worthy few may be hated, but those who receive it, by the world at large will be despised. Conscious of this, I disdained making any appeal; myself the only sufferer, I had a right to be the only judge, and, shaking off the base trammels of interest and subjection, I quitted the house in silent indignation, not choosing to remonstrate, where I desired not to be reconciled."

" And was there no mode of life," said Cecilia, " to adopt, but living with Lord Vannelt, or giving up the whole world?"

" I weighed every thing maturely," answered he, " before I made my determination, and I found it so much the most eligible, that I am certain I can never repent it. I had friends who would with pleasure have presented me to some other nobleman; but my whole heart revolted against leading that kind of life, and I would not, therefore, idly rove from one great man to another, adding ill-will to disgrace, and pursuing hope in defiance of common sense; no; when I quitted Lord Vannelt, I resolved to give up patronage for ever."

" I

" I retired to private lodgings to deliberate what next could be done. I had lived in many ways, I had been unfortunate or imprudent in all. The law I had tried, but its rudiments were tedious and disgusting ; the army, too, but there found my mind more fatigued with indolence, than my body with action ; general dissipation had then its turn, but the expence to which it led was ruinous, and self-reproach baffled pleasure while I pursued it ; I have even—yes, there are few things I have left untried,—I have even,—for why now disguise it ?—"

He stopt and coloured, but in a quicker voice presently proceeded.

" Trade, also, has had its share in my experiments : for that, in truth, I was originally destined,—but my education had ill suited me to such a destination, and the trader's first maxim I reversed, in lavishing when I ought to have accumulated.

" What, then, remained for me ? to run over again the same irksome round I had not patience, and to attempt any thing new I was unqualified : money I had none ; my friends I could bear to burthen no longer ; a fortnight I lingered in wretched irresolution,—a simple accident at the end of it happily settled me ; I was walking, one morning, in Hyde Park, forming a thousand plans for my future life, but quarrelling with them all ; when a gentleman met me on horseback, from whom,

whom, at my Lord Vannelt's, I had received particular civilities ; I looked another way not to be seen by him, and the change in my dress since I left his Lordship's made me easily pass unnoticed. He had rode on, however, but a few yards, before, by some accident or mismanagement, he had a fall from his horse. Forgetting all my caution, I flew instantly to his assistance ; he was bruised, but not otherwise hurt ; I helped him up, and he leant upon my arm ; in my haste of enquiring how he had fared, I called him by his name. He knew me, but looked surprised at my appearance ; he was speaking to me, however, with kindness, when seeing some gentlemen of his acquaintance gallopping up to him, he hastily disengaged himself from me, and instantly beginning to recount to them what had happened, he sedulously looked another way, and joining his new companions, walked off without taking further notice of me. For a moment I was almost tempted to trouble him to come back ; but a little recollection told me how ill he deserved my resentment, and bid me transfer it for the future from the pitiful individual to the worthless community.

“ Here finished my deliberation ; the disgust to the world which I had already conceived, this little incident confirmed ; I saw it was only made for the great and the rich ;— poor, therefore, and low, what had I to do in it ? I determined to quit it for ever, and to
end

end every disappointment, by crushing every hope.

" I wrote to Lord Vannelt to send my trunks to my mother; I wrote to my mother that I was well, and would soon let her hear more. I then paid off my lodgings, and "shaking the dust from my feet," bid a long adieu to London; and, committing my route to chance, strolled on into the country, without knowing or caring which way.

" My first thought was simply to seek retirement, and to depend for my future repose upon nothing but a total seclusion from society: but my slow method of travelling gave me time for reflection, and reflection soon shewed me the error of this notion.

" Guilt, cried I, may, indeed, be avoided by solitude; but will misery? will regret? will deep dejection of mind? no; they will follow more assiduously than ever; for what is there to oppose them, where neither business occupies the time, nor hope the imagination? where the past has left nothing but resentment, and the future opens only to a dismal, uninteresting void? No stranger to life, I knew human nature could not exist on such terms; still less a stranger to books, I respected the voice of wisdom and experience in the first of moralists, and most enlightened of men,* and reading the letter of Cowley, I saw the vanity and absurdity of *panting after solitude.*†

" I sought

* Dr Johnson.

† Life of Cowley, p. 34.

“ I sought not, therefore, a cell ; but, since I purposed to live for myself, I determined for myself also to think. Servility of imitation has ever been as much my scorn as servility of dependence ; I resolved, therefore, to strike out something new, and no more to retire, as every other man had retired, than to linger in the world as every other man had lingered.

“ The result of all you now see. I found out this cottage, and took up my abode in it. I am here out of the way of all society, yet avoid the great evil of retreat, *having nothing to do*. I am constantly, not capriciously employed, and the exercise which benefits my health, imperceptibly raises my spirits in despight of adversity. I am removed from all temptation, I have scarce even the power to do wrong ; I have no object for ambition, for repining I have no time :—I have found out, I repeat, the true secret of happiness, labour with independence.”

He stopt ; and Cecilia, who had listened to this narrative with a mixture of compassion, admiration and censure, was too much struck with its singularity to be readily able to answer it. Her curiosity to hear him had sprung wholly from her desire to assist him, and she had expected from his story to gather some hint upon which her services might be offered. But none had occurred ; he professed himself fully satisfied with his situation ; and though reason and probability contradicted

ted the profession, she could not venture to dispute it with any delicacy or prudence.

She thanked him, therefore, for his relation, with many apologies for the trouble she had given him, and added, "I must not express my concern for misfortunes which you seem to regard as conducive to your contentment, nor remonstrate at the step you have taken, since you have been led to it by choice, not necessity; but yet, you must pardon me if I cannot help hoping I shall some time see you happier, according to the common, however vulgar ideas of the rest of the world."

"No, never, never!" I am sick of mankind, not from theory, but experience; and the precautions I have taken against mental fatigue, will secure me from repentance, or any desire of change; for it is not the active, but the indolent who weary; it is not the temperate, but the pampered who are capricious."

"Is your sister, Sir, acquainted with this change in your fortune and opinions."

"Poor girl, no! She and her unhappy mother have borne but too long with my enterprizes and misfortunes. Even yet they would sacrifice whatever they possess to enable me to play once more the game so often lost; but I will not abuse their affection, nor suffer them again to be slaves to my caprices, nor dupes to their own delusive expectations. I have sent them word I am happy; I have not yet told them how or where. I fear much

the affliction of their disappointment, and, for a while shall conceal from them my situation, which they would fancy was disgraceful, and grieve it as cruel."

" And is it *not* cruel?" said Cecilia, " is labour indeed so sweet? and can you seriously derive happiness from what all others consider as misery?"

" Not sweet," answered he, " in itself; but sweet, most sweet and salutary in its effects. When I work, I forget all the world; my projects for the future, my disappointments from the past. Mental fatigue is over-powered by personal; I toil till I require rest, and that rest which nature, not luxury demands, leads not to idle meditation, but to sound, heavy, necessary sleep. I awake the next morning to the same thought-exiling business, work again till my powers are exhausted, and am relieved again at night by the same health-recruiting insensibility."

" And if this," cried Cecilia, " is the life of happiness, why have we so many complaints of the sufferings of the poor, and why so eternally do we hear of their hardships and distress?"

" They have known no other life. They are strangers, therefore, to the felicity of their lot. Had they mingled in the world, fed high their fancy with hope, and looked forward with expectation of enjoyment; had they been courted by the great, and offered with

with profusion adulation for their abilities, yet, even when starving, been offered nothing else!—had they seen an attentive circle wait all its entertainment from their powers, yet found themselves forgotten as soon as out of sight, and perceived themselves avoided when no longer buffoons!—Oh, had they known and felt provocations such as these, how gladly would their resentful spirits turn from the whole unfeeling race, and how would they respect that noble and manly labour, which at once disentangles them from such subjugating snares, and enables them to fly the ingratitude they abhor! Without the contrast of vice, virtue unloved may be lovely; without the experience of misery, happiness is simply a dull privation of evil."

"And are you so content," cried Cecilia, "with your present situation, as even to think it offers you reparation for your past sufferings?"

"Content!" repeated he with energy, "O more than content, I am proud of my present situation!—I glory in shewing to the world, I glory still more in shewing to myself, that those whom I cannot but despise I will not scruple to defy, and that where I have been treated unworthily, I will scorn to be obliged."

"But will you pardon me," said Cecilia, "should I ask again, why in quitting Lord Vannelt, you concluded no one else worthy a trial?"

" Because it was less my Lord Vannelt, madam, than my own situation, that disgusted me : for though I liked not his behaviour, I found him a man too generally esteemed to flatter myself better usage would await me in merely changing my abode, while my station was the same. I believe, indeed, he never meant to offend me ; but I was offended the more that he should think me an object to receive indignity without knowing it. To have had this pointed out to him, would have been at once mortifying and vain ; for delicacy, like taste, can only partially be taught, and will always be superficial and erring where it is not innate. Those wrongs, which though too trifling to resent, are too humiliating to be borne, speech can convey no idea of ; the soul must feel, or the understanding can never comprehend them."

" But surely," said Cecilia, " though people of refinement are rare, they yet exist ; why, then, remove yourself from the possibility of meeting with them ?"

" Must I run about the nation," cried he, " proclaiming my distress, and describing my temper ? telling the world that though dependent I demand respect as well as assistance ; and publishing to mankind, that though poor I will accept no gifts if offered with contumely ? Who will listen to such an account ? who will care for my misfortunes, but as they may humble me to his service ? who will hear my mortifica-

mortifications, but to say I deserve them ? what has the world to do with my feelings and peculiarities ? I know it too well to think calamity will soften it ; I need no new lessons to instruct me that to conquer affliction is more wise than to relate it .”

“ Unfortunate as you have been ,” said Cecilia , “ I cannot wonder at your asperity ; but yet , it is surely no more than justice to acknowledge , that hard-heartedness to distress is by no means the fault of the present times : on the contrary , it is scarce sooner made known , than every one is ready to contribute to its relief .”

“ And how contribute ? ” cried he , “ by a paltry donation of money ? Yes , the man whose only want is a few guineas , may , indeed , obtain them ; but he who asks kindness and protection , whose oppressed spirit calls for consolation even more than his ruined fortune for repair , how is his struggling soul , if superior to his fate , to brook the ostentation of patronage , and the insolence of condescension ? Yes , yes , the world will save the poor beggar who is starving ; but the fallen wretch , who will not cringe for his support , may consume in his own wretchedness without pity and without help ! ”

Cecilia now saw that the wound his sensibility had received was too painful for argument , and too recent immediately to be healed . She forbore , therefore , to detain him any

longer, but expressing her best wishes, without venturing to hint at her services, she arose, and they all took their leave ;—Belfield hastening, as they went, to return to the garden, where, looking over the hedge as they passed, they saw him employed again in weeding, with the eagerness of a man who pursues his favourite occupation.

Cecilia half forgot her own anxieties and sadness, in the concern which she felt for this unfortunate and extraordinary young man. She wished much to devise some means for drawing him from a life of such hardship and obscurity ; but what to a man thus “ jealous in honour,” thus scrupulous in delicacy, could she propose, without more risk of offence, than probability of obliging ? His account had, indeed, convinced her how much he stood in need of assistance, but it had shewn her no less how fastidious he would be in receiving it.

Nor was she wholly without fear that an earnest solicitude to serve him, his youth, talents, and striking manners considered, might occasion even in himself a misconstruction of her motives, such as she already had given birth to in his forward and partial mother.

The present, therefore, all circumstances weighed, seemed no season for her liberality, which she yet resolved to exert the first moment it was un-opposed by propriety.

C H A P. II.

A CONTEST.

THE rest of the day was passed in discussing this adventure; but in the evening, Cecilia's interest in it was all sunk, by the reception of the following letter from Mrs Delvile:

To Miss BEVERLEY.

I grieve to interrupt the tranquility of a retirement so judiciously chosen, and I lament the necessity of again calling to trial the virtue of which the exertion, though so captivating, is so painful; but alas, my excellent young friend, we came not hither to enjoy, but to suffer; and happy only are those whose sufferings have neither by folly been sought, nor by guilt been merited, but arising merely from the imperfection of humanity, have been resisted with fortitude, or endured with patience.

I am informed of your virtuous steadiness, which corresponds with my expectations, while it excites my respect. All further conflict I had hoped to have saved you; and to the triumph of your goodness I had trusted for the recovery of your peace: but Mortimer has disappointed me, and our work is still unfinished.

He avers that he is solemnly engaged to you, and in pleading to me his honour, he silences both expostulation and authority. From your own words alone will he acknowledge his dismission; and notwithstanding my reluctance to impose upon you this task, I cannot silence or quiet him without making the request.

For a purpose such as this, can you, then, admit us? Can you bear with your own lips to confirm the irrevocable decision? You will feel, I am sure, for the unfortunate Mortimer, and it was earnestly my desire to spare you the sight of his affliction; yet such is my confidence in your prudence, that since I find him bent upon seeing you, I am not without hope, that from witnessing the greatness of your mind, the interview may rather calm than inflame him.

This proposal you will take into consideration, and if you are able, upon such terms, to again meet my son, we will wait upon you together, where and when you will appoint; but if the gentleness of your nature will make the effort too severe for you, scruple not to decline it, for Mortimer, when he knows your pleasure, will submit to it as he ought.

Adieu, most amiable and but too lovely Cecilia; whatever you determine, be sure of my concurrence, for nobly have you earned, and ever must you retain, the esteem, the affection, and the gratitude of

AUGUSTA DELVILE.

" Alas

" Alas," cried Cecilia, " when shall I be at rest? when cease to be persecuted by new conflicts! Oh, why must I so often, so cruelly, though so reluctantly, reject and reprove the man who of all men I wish to accept and to please!"

But yet, though repining at this hard necessity, she hesitated not a moment in complying with Mrs Delvile's request, and immediately sent an answer that she would meet her the next morning at Mrs Charlton's.

She then returned to the parlour, and apologized to Mrs Harrel and Mr Arnott for the abruptness of her visit, and the suddenness of her departure. Mr Arnott heard her in silent dejection; and Mrs Harrel used all the persuasion in her power to prevail with her to stay, her presence being some relief to her solitude: but finding it ineffectual, she earnestly pressed her to hasten her entrance into her own house, that their absence might be shortened and their meeting more sprightly.

Cecilia passed the night in planning her behaviour for the next day; she found how much was expected from her by Mrs Delvile, who had even exhorted her to decline the interview if doubtful of her own strength. Delvile's firmness in insisting the refusal should come directly from herself, surprised, gratified and perplexed her in turn; she had imagined, that from the moment of the discovery, he would implicitly have submitted to the

award of a parent at once so reverenced and so beloved, and how he had summoned courage to contend with her she could not conjecture: yet that courage and that contention astonished not more than they soothed her, since, from her knowledge of his filial tenderness, she considered them as the most indubitable proofs she had yet received of the fervor and constancy of his regard for her. But would he, when she had ratified the decision of his mother, forbear all further struggle, and for ever yield up all pretensions to her? this was the point upon which her uncertainty turned, and the ruling subject of her thoughts and meditation.

To be steady, however, herself, be his conduct what it might, was invariably her intention, and was all her ambition: yet earnestly she wished the meeting over, for she dreaded to see the sorrow of Delvile, and she dreaded still more the susceptibility of her own heart.

The next morning, to her great concern, Mr Arnott was waiting in the hall when she came down stairs, and so much grieved at her departure, that he handed her to the chaise without being able to speak to her, and hardly heard her thanks and compliments, but by recollection after she was gone.

She arrived at Mrs Charlton's very early, and found her old friend in the same state she had

had left her. She communicated to her the purpose of her return, and begged she would keep her grand-daughters up stairs, that the conference in the parlour might be uninterrupted and unheard.

She then made a forced and hasty breakfast, and went down to be ready to receive them. They came not till eleven o'clock, and the time of her waiting was passed in agonies of expectation.

At length they were announced, and at length they entered the room.

Cecilia, with her utmost efforts for courage, could hardly stand to receive them. They came in together, but Mrs Delvile, advancing before her son, and endeavouring so to stand as to intercept his view of her, with the hope that in a few instants her emotion would be less visible, said, in the most soothing accents, "What honour Miss Beverley does us by permitting this visit! I should have been sorry to have left Suffolk without the satisfaction of again seeing you; and my son, sensible of the high respect he owes you, was most unwilling to be gone, before he had paid you his devoirs."

Cecilia courtised; but depressed by the cruel task which awaited her, had no power to speak; and Mrs Delvile, finding she still trembled, made her sit down, and drew a chair next to her.

Mean while Delvile, with an emotion far more violent, because wholly unrestrained, waited impatiently till the ceremonial of the reception was over, and then, approaching Cecilia, in a voice of perturbation and resentment, said, "In this presence, at least, I hope I may be heard; though my letters have been unanswered, my visits refused, though inexorably you have flown me—"

"Mortimer," interrupted Mrs Delvile, "forget not that what I have told you is irrevocable; you now meet Miss Beverley for no other purpose than to give and to receive a mutual release of all tie or engagement with each other."

"Pardon me, madam," cried he, "this is a condition to which I have never assented. I come not to release, but to claim her! I am hers, and hers wholly! I protest it in the face of the world! The time, therefore, is now past for the sacrifice which you demand, since scarce are you more my mother, than I consider her as my wife."

Cecilia, amazed at this dauntless declaration, now almost lost her fear in her surprise; while Mrs Delvile, with an air calm, though displeased, answered, "This is not a point to be at present discussed, and I had hoped you knew better what was due to your auditors. I only consented to this interview as a mark of your respect for Miss Beverley, to whom in propriety it belongs to break off this unfortunate connexion."

Cecilia,

Cecilia, who at this call could no longer be silent, now gathered fortitude to say, " Whatever tie or obligation may be supposed to depend upon me, I have already relinquished; and I am now ready to declare—"

" That you wholly give me up?" interrupted Delvile, " is that what you would say:—Oh, how have I offended you? how have I merited a displeasure that can draw upon me such a sentence?—Answer, speak to me, Cecilia, what is it I have done?"

" Nothing, Sir," said Cecilia, confounded at this language in the presence of his mother, " you have done nothing, but yet—"

" Yet what?—have you conceived to me an aversion? has any dreadful and horrible antipathy succeeded to your esteem;—tell, tell me without disguise, do you hate, do you abhor me?"

Cecilia sighed, and turned away her head: and Mrs Delvile indignantly exclaimed, " What madness and absurdity! I scarce know you under the influence of such irrational violence. Why will you interrupt Miss Beverley in the only speech you ought to hear from her? Why, at once, oppress her, and irritate me, by words of more passion than reason? Go on, charming girl, finish what so wisely, so judiciously you were beginning, and then you shall be released from this turbulent persecution."

" No,

"No, madam, she must not go on!" cried Delvile, "if she does not utterly abhor me, I will not *suffer* her to go on;—Pardon, pardon me, Cecilia, but your too exquisite delicacy is betraying not only my happiness, but your own. Once more, therefore, I conjure you to hear me, and then if, deliberately and unbiassed, you renounce me, I will never more distress you by resisting your decree."

Cecilia, abashed and changing colour, was silent, and he proceeded.

"All that has past between us, the vows I have offered you of faith, constancy and affection, the consent I obtained from you to be legally mine, the bond of settlement I have had drawn up, and the high honour you conferred upon me in suffering me to lead you to the altar,—all these particulars are already known to so many, that the least reflection must convince you they will soon be concealed from none: tell me, then, if your own fame pleads not for me, and if the scruples which lead you to refuse, by taking another direction, will not, with much more propriety, urge, nay, enjoin you to accept me?—you hesitate at least,—O Miss Beverley! I see in that hesitation—"

"Nothing, nothing!" cried she, hastily, and checking her rising irresolution; "there is nothing for you to see, but that every way
I now

I now turn I have rendered myself miserable!"

" Mortimer," said Mrs Delvile, seized with terror as she penetrated into the mental yielding of Cecilia, " you have now spoken to Miss Beverley; and unwilling as I am to obtrude upon her our difference of sentiment, it is necessary, since she has heard you, that I, also, should claim her attention."

" First let her speak!" cried Delvile, who in her apparent wavering built new hopes, " first let her answer what she has already deigned to listen to."

" No, first let her hear!" cried Mrs Delvile, " for so only can she judge what answer will reflect upon her most honour."

Then, solemnly turning to Cecilia, she continued: " You see here, Miss Beverley, a young man who passionately adores you, and who forgets in his adoration, friends, family, and connections, the opinions in which he has been educated, the honour of his house, his own former views, and all his primitive sense of duty, both public and private!—A passion built on such a defalcation of principle renders him unworthy your acceptance; and not more ignoble for him would be a union which would blot his name from the injured stock whence he sprung, than indelicate for you, who upon such terms ought to despise him."

" Heavens,

"Heavens, madam," exclaimed Delvile,
"what a speech!"

"O never," cried Cecilia, rising, "may I
hear such another! Indeed, madam, there is
no occasion to probe me so deeply, for I would
not now enter into your family, for all that
the whole world could offer me!"

"At length, then, madam," cried Delvile,
turning reproachfully to his mother, "are
you satisfied? is your purpose now answered?
and is the dagger you have transfixed in my
heart sunk deep enough to appease you?"

"O could I draw it out," cried Mrs Del-
vile, "and leave upon it no stain of igno-
miny, with what joy should my own bosom
receive it, to heal the wound I have most
compulsorily inflicted!—Were this excel-
lent young creature portionless, I would not
hesitate in giving my consent; every claim
of interest would be overbalanced by her vir-
tues, and I would not grieve to see you poor,
where so conscious you were happy; but here
to concede, would annihilate every hope with
which hitherto I have looked up to my son."

"Let us now, then, madam," said Cecilia,
"break up this conference. I have spoken,
I have heard, the decree is past, and there-
fore,—"

"You are indeed an angel!" cried Mrs
Delvile, rising and embracing her; "and
never can I reproach my son with what has
past, when I consider for what an object the
sacrifice

sacrifice was planned. *You* cannot be unhappy, you have purchased peace by the exercise of virtue, and the close of every day will bring to you a reward, in the sweets of a self-approving mind.—But we will part, since you think it right; I do wrong to occasion any delay."

" No, we will *not* part!" cried Delvile, with encreasing vehemence; " if you force me, madam, from her, you will drive me to distraction! What is there in this world that can offer me a recompence? And what can pride even to the proudest afford as an equivalent? Her perfections you acknowledge, her greatness of mind is like your own; she has generously given me her heart.—Oh, sacred and fascinating charge! Shall I, after such a deposite, consent to an eternal separation? Repeal, repeal your sentence, my Cecilia! let us live to ourselves and our consciences, and leave the vain prejudices of the world to those who can be paid by them for the loss of all besides!"

" Is this conflict, then," said Mrs Delvile, " to last for ever? Oh end it, Mortimer, finish it, and make me happy! she is just, and will forgive you; she is noble-minded, and will honour you. Fly, then, at this critical moment, for in flight alone is your safety; and then will your father see the son of his hopes, and then shall the fond blessings of your idolizing

ing mother soothe all your affliction, and soften all your regret!"

"Oh, madam!" cried Delvile, "for mercy, for humanity, forbear this cruel supplication."

"Nay, more than supplication, you have my commands; commands you have never yet disputed, and misery ten-fold misery, will follow their disobedience. Hear me, Mortimer, for I speak prophetically; I know your heart, I know it to be formed for rectitude and duty, or destined by their neglect to repentance and horror."

Delvile, struck by these words, turned suddenly from them both, and in gloomy despondence walked to the other end of the room. Mrs Delvile perceived the moment of her power, and determined to pursue the blow; taking, therefore, the hand of Cecilia, while her eyes sparkled with the animation of reviving hope, "See," she cried, pointing to her son, "see if I am deceived! can he bear even the suggestion of future contrition? Think you when it falls upon him, he will support it better? No; he will sink under it. And you, pure as you are of mind, and steadfast in principle, what would your chance be of happiness with a man who never erring till he knew you, could never look at you without regret, be his fondness what it might?"

"Oh, madam," cried the greatly shocked Cecilia, "let him, then, see me no more!—take, take him all to yourself! forgive, console

sole him ! I will not have the misery of involving him in repentance, nor of incurring the reproaches of the mother he so much reverences !”

“ Exalted creature !” cried Mrs Delvile ; “ tenderness such as this would confer honour upon a monarch.” Then, calling out exultingly to her son, “ See,” she added, “ how greatly a woman can act, when stimulated by generosity and a just sense of duty ! Follow then, at least, the example you ought to have led, and deserve my esteem and love, or be content to forego them.”

“ And can I only deserve them,” said Delvile, in a tone of the deepest anguish, “ by a compliance to which not merely my happiness but my reason must be sacrificed ? What honour do I injure that is not factitious ? What evil threatens our union, that is not imaginary ? In the general commerce of the world it may be right to yield to its prejudices, but in matters of serious importance, it is weakness to be shackled by scruples so frivolous, and it is cowardly to be governed by the customs we condemn. Religion and the laws of our country should then alone be consulted, and where those are neither opposed nor infringed, we should hold ourselves superior to all other considerations.”

“ Mistaken notions !” said Mrs Delvile ; “ and how long do you flatter yourself this independent happiness would endure ? How long

long could you live contented by mere self-gratification, in defiance of the censure of mankind, the renunciation of your family, and the curses of your father?"

"The curses of my father?" repeated he, starting and shuddering, "O no, he could never be so barbarous!"

"He could," said she, steadily, "nor do I doubt but he would. If now, however, you are affected by the prospect of his disclaiming you, think but what you will feel when first forbid to appear before either of us!" and think of your remorse for involving Miss Beverley in such disgrace!"

"O speak not such words!" cried he, with agonizing earnestness, "to disgrace her—to be banished by you,—present not, I conjure you, such scenes to my imagination!"

"Yet would they be unavoidable," continued she; nor have I said to you all; blinded as you now are by passion, your nobler feelings are only obscured, not extirpated; think then how they will all rise in revenge of your insulted dignity, when your name becomes a stranger to your ears, and you are first saluted by one so meanly adopted!—"

"Hold, hold, madam," interrupted he, "this is more than I can bear!"

"Heavens!" still continued she, disregarding his intreaty, "what in the universe can pay you for that first moment of indignity! Think of it well ere you proceed, and anti-

anticipate your sensations, lest the shock should wholly overcome you. How will the blood of your wronged ancestors rise into your guilty cheeks, and how will your heart throb with secret shame and reproach, when wished joy upon your marriage by the name of Mr Beverley!"

Delvile, stung to the soul, attempted not any answer, but walked about the room in the utmost disorder of mind. Cecilia would have retired, but feared irritating him to some extravagance; and Mrs Delvile looking after him, added, "For myself, I would still see, for I should pity your wife,—but NEVER would I behold my son when sunk into an object of compassion!"

"It shall not be!" cried he, in a transport of rage; "cease, cease to distract me!—be content, madam,—you have conquered!"

"Then you are my son!" cried she, rapturously embracing him; "now I know again my Mortimer! now I see the fair promise of his upright youth, and the flattering completion of my maternal expectations!"

Cecilia, finding all thus concluded, desired nothing so much as to congratulate them on their reconciliation; but having only said, "Let me too,—" her voice failed her, she stopt short, and hoping she had been unheard, would have glided out of the room.

But Delvile, penetrated and tortured, yet delighted at this sensibility, broke from his mother,

mother, and seizing her hand, exclaimed, "Oh, Miss Beverley, if *you* are not happy—"

"I am! I am," cried she, with quickness; "let me pass,—and think no more of me."

"That voice,—those looks,—" cried he, still holding her, "they speak not serenity!—Oh, if I have injured your peace,—if that heart, which, pure as angels, deserves to be as sacred from sorrow, through my means, or for my sake, suffers any diminution of tranquillity—"

"None, none!" interrupted she, with precipitation.

"I know well," cried he, "your greatness of soul; and if this dreadful sacrifice gives lasting torture only to myself,—if of *your* returning happiness I could be assured,—I would struggle to bear it."

"You *may* be assured of it," cried she, with reviving dignity, "I have no right to expect escaping all calamity, but while I share the common lot, I will submit to it without repining."

"Heaven then bless, and hovering angels watch you!" cried he, and letting go her hand, he ran hastily out of the room.

"Oh, Virtue, how bright is thy triumph!" exclaimed Mrs Delvile, flying up to Cecilia, and folding her in her arms; "Noble, incomparable young creature! I knew not that so much worth was compatible with human frailty!"

But

But the heroism of Cecilia, in losing its object, lost its force; she sighed, she could not speak; tears gushed into her eyes, and kissing Mrs Delvile's hand with a look that shewed her inability to converse with her, she hastened, though scarce able to support herself, away, with intention to shut herself up in her own apartment: and Mrs Delvile, who perceived that her utmost fortitude was exhausted, opposed not her going, and wisely forbore to encrease her emotion, by following her even with her blessings.

But when she came into the hall, she started, and could proceed no farther; for there she beheld Delvile, who in too great agony to be seen, had stopt to recover some composure before he quitted the house.

At the first sound of an opening door, he was hastily escaping; but perceiving Cecilia, and discerning her situation, he more hastily turned back, saying, "Is it possible?—To me were you coming?"

She shook her head, and made a motion with her hand to say no, and would then have gone on.

"You are weeping!" cried he, "you are pale!—Oh, Miss Beverley! is this your happiness?"

"I am very well,—" cried she, not knowing what she answered, "I am quite well,—pray go,—I am very—" her words died away inarticulated.

"Oh,

" Oh, what a voice is that!" exclaimed he, " it pierces my very soul!"

Mrs Delvile now came to the parlour door, and looked aghast at the situation in which she saw them: Cecilia again moved on, and reached the stairs, but tottered, and was obliged to cling to the bannisters.

" O suffer me to support you," cried he; " you are not able to stand—whither is it you would go?"

" Any where,—I don't know—" answered she, in faltering accents, " but if you would leave me, I should be well."

And, turning from him, she walked again towards the parlour, finding by her shaking frame, the impossibility of getting unaided up the stairs.

" Give me your hand, my love," said Mrs Delvile, cruelly alarmed by this return; and the moment they re-entered the parlour, she said impatiently to her son, " Mortimer, why are you not gone?"

He heard her not, however; his whole attention was upon Cecilia, who, sinking into a chair, hid her face against Mrs Delvile: but, reviving in a few moments, and blushing at the weakness she had betrayed, she raised her head, and, with an assumed serenity, said " I am better,—much better,—I was rather sick,—but it is over; and now, if you will excuse me, I will go to my own room."

She

She then arose, but her knees trembled, and her head was giddy, and again seating herself, she forced a faint smile, and said, "Perhaps I had better keep quiet."

"Can I bear this!" cried Delvile, "no, it shakes all my resolutions!—loveliest and most beloved Cecilia! forgive my rash declaration, which I here retract and forswear, and which no false pride, no worthless vanity shall again surprise from me!—raise, then, your eyes—"

"Hot-headed young man!" interrupted Mrs Delvile, with an air of haughty displeasure, "if you cannot be rational, at least be silent. Miss Beverley, we will both leave him."

Shame, and her own earnestness, now restored some strength to Cecilia, who read with terror in the looks of Mrs Delvile the passions with which she was agitated, and instantly obeyed her by rising; but her son, who inherited a portion of her own spirit, rushed between them both and the door, and exclaimed, "Stay, madam, stay! I cannot let you go: I see your intention, I see your dreadful purpose; you will work upon the feelings of Miss Beverley, you will extort from her a promise to see me no more!"

"Oppose not my passing!" cried Mrs Delvile, whose voice, face, and manner, spoke the increasing disturbance of her soul; "I have but too long talked to you in vain; I

must now take some better method for the security of the honour of my family."

This moment appeared to Delvile decisive; and casting off in desperation all timidity and restraint, he suddenly sprang forward, and snatching the hand of Cecilia from his mother, he exclaimed, "I cannot, I will not give her up!—nor now, madam, nor ever!—I protest it most solemnly! I affirm it by my best hopes! I swear it by all that I hold sacred!"

Grief and horror next to frenzy at a disappointment thus unexpected, and thus peremptory, rose in the face of Mrs Delvile, who, striking her hand upon her forehead, cried, "My brain is on fire!" and rushed out of the room.

Cecilia had now no difficulty to disengage herself from Delvile, who, shocked at the exclamation, and confounded by the sudden departure of his mother, hastened eagerly to pursue her: she had only flown into the next parlour; but, upon following her thither, what was his dread and his alarm, when he saw her extended upon the floor, her face, hands, and neck all covered with blood! "Great Heaven!" he exclaimed, prostrating himself by her side, "what is it you have done!—where are you wounded?—what direful curse have you denounced against your son?"

Not able to speak, she angrily shook her head, and indignantly made a motion with her

her hand, that commanded him from her sight.

Cecilia, who had followed, though half dead with terror, had yet the presence of mind to ring the bell. A servant came immediately; and Delvile, starting up from his mother, ordered him to fetch the first surgeon or physician he could find.

The alarm now brought the rest of the servants into the room, and Mrs Delvile suffered herself to be raised from the ground, and seated in a chair; she was still silent, but shewed a disgust to any assistance from her son, that made him deliver her into the hands of the servants, while, in speechless agony, he only looked on and watched her.

Neither did Cecilia, though forgetting her own sorrow, and no longer sensible of personal weakness, venture to approach her: uncertain what had happened, she yet considered herself as the ultimate cause of this dreadful scene, and feared to risk the effect of the smallest additional emotion.

The servant returned with a surgeon in a few minutes: Cecilia, unable to wait and hear what he would say, glided hastily out of the room; and Delvile, in still greater agitation, followed her quick into the next parlour; but having eagerly advanced to speak to her, he turned precipitately about, and hurrying into the hall, walked in hasty steps up and down

it, without courage to enquire what was passing.

At length the surgeon came out : Delvile flew to him, and stopt him, but could ask no question. His countenance, however, rendered words unnecessary ; the surgeon understood him, and said, " The lady will do very well ; she has burst a blood vessel, but I think it will be of no consequence. She must be kept quiet and easy, and upon no account suffered to talk, or to use any exertion."

Delvile now let him go, and flew himself into a corner to return thanks to heaven that the evil, however great, was less than he had at first apprehended. He then went into the parlour to Cecilia, eagerly calling out, " Heaven be praised, my mother has not voluntarily cursed me ! "

" O now then," cried Cecilia, " once more make her bless you ! the violence of her agitation has already almost destroyed her, and her frame is too weak for this struggle of contending passions ;—go to her, then, and calm the tumult of her spirits, by acquiescing wholly in her will, and being to her again the son she thinks she has lost ! "

" Alas ! " said he, in a tone of the deepest dejection ; " I have been preparing myself for that purpose, and waited but your commands to finally determine me."

" Let us both go to her instantly," said Cecilia ; " the least delay may be fatal."

She

She now led the way, and approaching Mrs Delvile, who, faint and weak, was seated upon an arm-chair, and resting her head upon the shoulder of a maid servant, said, "Lean, dearest madam, upon *me*, and speak not, but hear us!"

She then took the place of the maid, and desired her and the other servants to go out of the room. Delvile advanced, but his mother's eye, recovering, at his sight, its wonted fire, darted upon him a glance of such displeasure, that, shuddering with the apprehension of inflaming again those passions which threatened her destruction, he hastily funk on one knee, and abruptly exclaimed, "Look at me with less abhorrence, for I come but to resign myself to your will."

"Mine, also," cried Cecilia, "that will shall be; you need not speak it, we know it, and here solemnly we promise that we will separate for ever."

"Revive, then, my mother," said Delvile, "rely upon our plighted honours, and think only of your health, for your son will never more offend you."

Mrs Delvile, much surprised, and strongly affected, held out her hand to him, with a look of mingled compassion and obligation, and dropping her head upon the bosom of Cecilia, who with her other arm she pressed towards her, she burst into an agony of tears.

"Go, go, Sir!" said Cecilia, cruelly alarmed, "you have said all that is necessary; leave Mrs Delvile now, and she will be more composed."

Delvile instantly obeyed, and then his mother, whose mouth still continued to fill with blood, though it gushed not from her with the violence it had begun, was prevailed upon by the prayers of Cecilia to consent to be conveyed into her room; and, as her immediate removal to another house might be dangerous, she complied also, though very reluctantly, with her urgent entreaties, that she would take entire possession of it till the next day.

This point gained, Cecilia left her, to communicate what had past to Mrs Charlton, but was told by one of the servants, that Mr Delvile begged first to speak with her in the next room.

She hesitated for a moment whether to grant this request; but recollecting it was right to acquaint him with his mother's intention of staying all night, she went to him.

"How indulgent you are," cried he, in a melancholy voice as she opened the door; "I am now going post to Dr Lyster, whom I shall entreat to come hither instantly; but I am fearful of again disturbing my mother, and must therefore rely upon you to acquaint her what is become of me."

"Most

" Most certainly ; I have begged her to remain here to-night, and I hope I shall prevail with her to continue with me till Dr Lyster's arrival ; after which she will, doubtless, be guided either in staying longer, or removing elsewhere by his advice."

" You are all goodness," said he, with a deep sigh ; " and how I shall support—but I mean not to return hither, at least not to this house,—unless, indeed, Dr Lyster's account should be alarming. I leave my mother, therefore, to your kindness, and only hope, only entreat, that your own health,—your own peace of mind—neither by attendance upon her—by anxiety,—by pity for her son—"

He stopt, and seemed gasping for breath ; Cecilia turned from him to hide her emotion, and he proceeded with a rapidity of speech that shewed his terror of continuing with her any longer, and his struggle with himself to be gone : " The promise you have made in both our names to my mother, I shall hold myself bound to observe. I see indeed that her reason or her life would fall the sacrifice of further opposition : of myself, therefore, it is no longer time to think.—I take of you no leave—I cannot ! yet I would fain tell you the high reverence—but it is better to say nothing—"

" Much better," cried Cecilia, with a forced and faint smile ; " lose not, therefore, an instant, but hasten to this good Dr Lyster.

"I will ;" answered he, going to the door ; but there, stopping and turning round, "one thing I should yet," he added, "wish to say : I have been impetuous, violent, unreasonable, —with shame and with regret I recollect how impetuous, and how unreasonable : I have persecuted, where I ought in silence to have submitted; I have reproached, where I ought in candour to have approved ; and in the vehemence with which I have pursued you, I have censured that very dignity of conduct which has been the basis of my admiration, my esteem, my devotion ! but never can I forget, and never without fresh wonder remember, the sweetness with which you have borne with me, even when most I offended you.—For this impatience, this violence, this inconsistency, I now most sincerely beg your pardon ; and if, before I go, you could so far condescend as to pronounce my forgiveness, with a lighter heart, I think, I should quit you."

"Do not talk of forgiveness," said Cecilia, "you have never offended me ; I always knew—always was sure—always imputed--" she stopt, unable to proceed.

Deeply penetrated by the apparent distress, he with difficulty restrained himself from falling at her feet ; but after a moment's pause and recollection, he said, "I understand the generous indulgence you have shewn me, an indulgence I shall ever revere, and ever grieve

to

to have abused. I ask you not to remember me,—far, far happier do I wish you than such a remembrance could make you ; but I will pain the humanity of your disposition no longer. You will tell my mother—but no matter !—Heaven preserve you, my angelic Cecilia !—Miss Beverley, I mean,—Heaven guide, protect, and bless you ! And should I see you no more, should this be the last sad moment—”

He paused, but presently recovering himself, added, “ May I hear, at least, of your tranquility, for that alone can have any chance to quiet or repress the anguish I feel here !”

He then abruptly retreated, and ran out of the house.

Cecilia for a while remained almost stupefied with sorrow ; she forgot Mrs Delvile, she forgot Mrs Charlton, she forgot her own design of apologizing to one, or assisting the other ; she continued in the posture in which he had left her, quite without motion, and almost without sensibility.

C H A P. III.

A MESSAGE.

FROM this lethargy of sadness Cecilia was soon, however, awakened by the return of the surgeon, who had brought with him a physician to consult upon Mrs Delvile's situation. Terror for the mother once more drove the son from her thoughts, and she waited with the most apprehensive impatience to hear the result of the consultation. The physician declined giving any positive opinion, but, having written a prescription, only repeated the injunction of the surgeon, that she should be kept extremely quiet, and on no account be suffered to talk.

Cecilia, though shocked and frightened at the occasion, was yet by no means sorry at an order which thus precluded all conversation; unfitted for it by her own misery, she was glad to be relieved from all necessity of imposing upon herself, the irksome task of finding subjects for discourse to which she was wholly indifferent, while obliged with sedulity to avoid those by which alone her mind was occupied.

The worthy Mrs Charlton heard the events of the morning with the utmost concern, but charged

charged her grand-daughters to assist her young friend in doing the honours of her house to Mrs Delvile, while she ordered another apartment to be prepared for Cecilia, to whom she administered all the consolation her friendly zeal could suggest.

Cecilia, however unhappy, had too just a way of thinking to indulge in selfish grief, where occasion called her to action for the benefit of others: scarce a moment, therefore, now did she allow to sorrow and herself, but assiduously bestowed the whole of her time upon her two sick friends, dividing her attention according to their own desire or convenience, without consulting or regarding any choice of her own. Choice, indeed, she had none; she loved Mrs Charlton, she revered Mrs Delvile; the warmest wish with which her heart glowed, was the recovery of both, but too deep was her affliction to receive pleasure from either.

Two days passed thus, during which the constancy of her attendance, which at another time would have fatigued her, proved the only relief she was capable of receiving. Mrs Delvile was evidently affected by her vigilant tenderness, but seemed equally desirous with herself to make use of the prohibition to speech as an excuse for uninterrupted silence. She enquired not even after her son, though the eagerness of her look towards the door, whenever it was opened, shewed either a hope,

or an apprehension that he might enter. Cecilia wished to tell her whither he was gone, but dreaded trusting her voice with his name; and their silence, after a while, seemed so much by mutual consent, that she had soon as little courage as she had inclination to break it.

The arrival of Dr Lyster gave her much satisfaction, for upon him rested her hopes of Mrs Delvile's re-establishment. He sent for her down stairs, to enquire whether he was expected; and hearing that he was not, desired her to announce him, as the smallest emotion might do mischief.

She returned up stairs, and after a short preparation, said, "Your favourite Dr Lyster, madam, is come, and I shall be much the happier for having you under his care."

"Dr Lyster!" cried she, "who sent for him?"

"I believe—I fancy—Mr Delvile fetched him."

"My son;—is he here, then?"

"No,—he went, the moment he left you, for Dr Lyster,—and Dr Lyster is come by himself."

"Does he write to you?"

"No, indeed!—he writes not—he comes not—dearest madam be satisfied, he will do neither to *me* ever more?"

"Exemplary young man!" cried she, in a voice hardly audible, "how great is his loss!"

loss!—unhappy Mortimer!—ill-fated, and ill-rewarded!”

She sighed, and said no more; but this short conversation, the only one which had passed between them since her illness, agitated her so much, that Dr Lyster, who now came up stairs, found her in a state of trembling and weakness that both alarmed and surprised him. Cecilia, glad of an opportunity to be gone, left the room, and sent, by Dr Lyster’s desire, for the physician and surgeon who had already attended.

After they had been some time with their patient, they retired to a consultation, and when it was over, Dr Lyster waited upon Cecilia in the parlour, and assured her he had no apprehension of danger for Mrs Delvile; “ Though, for another week, he added, I would have her continue *your* patient, as she is not yet fit to be removed. But pray mind that she is kept quiet; let nobody go near her, not even her own son. By the way he is waiting for me at the inn, so I’ll just speak again to his mother, and be gone.”

Cecilia was well pleased by this accidental information, to learn both the anxiety of Delvile for his mother, and the steadiness of his forbearance for himself. When Dr Lyster came down stairs again, “ I shall stay,” he said, ‘till to-morrow, but I hope she will be able in another week to get to Bristol. In the mean time I shall leave her, I see, with an excellent

cellent nurse. But, my good young lady, in your care of her, don't neglect yourself; I am not quite pleased with your looks, though it is but an old fashioned speech to tell you so.—What have you been doing to yourself?"

"Nothing;" said she, a little embarrassed, "but had you not better have some tea?"

"Why, yes, I think I had;—but what shall I do with my young man?"

Cecilia understood the hint, but coloured, and made no answer.

"He is waiting for me," he continued, "at the inn; however, I never yet knew the young man I would prefer to a young woman, so if you will give me some tea here, I shall certainly jilt him."

Cecilia instantly rang the bell, and ordered tea.

"Well now," said he, "remember the sin of this breach of appointment lies wholly at your door. I shall tell him you laid violent hands on me; and if that is not enough to excuse me, I shall desire he will try whether he could be more of a stoic with you himself."

"I think I must unorder the tea," said she, with what gaiety she could assume, "if I am to be responsible for any mischief from your drinking it."

"No, no, you sha'nt be off now; but pray would it be quite out of rule for you to send and ask him to come to us?"

"Why

" Why I believe—I think—" said she, stammering, " it's very likely he may be engaged."

" Well, well, I don't mean to propose any violent incongruity. You must excuse my blundering; I understand but little of the *etiquette* of young ladies. 'Tis a science too intricate to be learned without more study than we plodding men of business can well spare time for. However, when I have done writing prescriptions, I will set about reading them, provided you will be my instructress."

Cecilia, though ashamed of a charge in which prudery and affectation were implied, was compelled to submit to it, as either to send for Delvile, or explain her objections, was equally impossible. The Miss Charltons therefore, joined them, and they went to tea.

Just as they had done, a note was delivered to Dr Lyster; " See here," cried he, when he had read it, " what a fine thing it is to be a young man! Why now, Mr Mortimer understands as much of all this *etiquette* as you ladies do yourselves; for he only writes a note even to ask how his mother does."

He then put it into Cecilia's hand.

TO DR LYSER.

TELL me, my dear Sir, how you have found my mother? I am uneasy at your long stay,

stay, and engaged with my friend Biddulph, or I should have followed you in person.

M. D.

"So you see," continued the doctor, "I need not do penance for engaging myself to *you*, when this young gentleman can find such good entertainment for himself."

Cecilia, who well knew the honourable motive of Delvile's engagement, with difficulty forbore speaking in his vindication. Dr Lyfster immediately began an answer, but before he had finished it, called out, "Now as I am told you are a very good young woman, I think you can do no less than afflict me to punish this gay spark, for playing the *macaroni*, when he ought to visit his sick mother."

Cecilia, much hurt for Delvile, and much confused for herself, looked abashed, but knew not what to answer.

"My scheme," continued the doctor, "is to tell him, that as he has found one engagement for tea, he may find another for supper; but that as to me, I am better disposed of, for you insist upon keeping me to yourself. Come, what says *etiquette*? may I treat myself with this puff?"

"Certainly," said Cecilia, endeavouring to look pleased, "if you will favour us with your company, Miss Charltons and myself will think the *puffing* should rather be ours than yours."

"That

"That then," said the doctor, "will not answer my purpose, for I mean the puff to be my own, or how do I punish him? So, suppose I tell him I shall not only sup with three young ladies, but be invited to a tête-à-tête with one of them into the bargain?"

The young ladies only laughed, and the doctor finished his note, and sent it away; and then, turning gaily to Cecilia, "Come," he said, "why don't you give me this invitation? surely you don't mean to make me guilty of perjury?"

Cecilia, but little disposed for pleasantries, would gladly now have dropped the subject; but Dr Lyster, turning to the Miss Charltons, said, "Young ladies, I call you both to witness if this is not very bad usage: this young woman has connived at my writing a downright falsehood, and all the time took me in to believe it was a truth. The only way I can think of to cure her of such frolics, is for both of you to leave us together, and so make her keep her word whether she will or no."

The Miss Charltons took the hint, and went away; while Cecilia, who had not at all suspected he meant seriously to speak with her, remained extremely perplexed to think what he had to say.

"Mrs Delvile," cried he, continuing the same air of easy good humour, "though I allowed her not to speak to me above twenty words, took up near ten of them to tell me
that

that you had behaved to her like an angel. Why so she ought, cried I ; what else was she sent for here to look so like one? I charged her, therefore, to take all that as a thing of course : and to prove that I really think what I say, I am now going to make a trial of you, that, if you are any thing less, will induce you to order some of your men to drive me into the street. The truth is, I have had a little commission given me, which in the first place I know not how to introduce, and which, in the second, as far as I can judge, appears to be absolutely superfluous."

Cecilia now felt uneasy and alarmed, and begged him to explain himself. He then dropped the levity with which he had begun the discourse, and after a grave, yet gentle preparation, expressive of his unwillingness to distress her, and his firm persuasion of her uncommon worthiness, he acquainted her that he was no stranger to her situation with respect to the Delvile family.

"Good God!" cried she, blushing and much amazed ; "and who—"

"I knew it," said he, "from the moment I attended Mr Mortimer in his illness at Delvile Castle. He could not conceal from me that the seat of his disorder was his mind; and I could not know that, without readily conjecturing the cause, when I saw who was his father's guest, and when I knew what was his father's character. He found he was betrayed

to

to me, and upon my advising a journey, he understood me properly. His openness to counsel, and the manly firmness with which he behaved in quitting you, made me hope the danger was blown over. But last week, when I was at the Castle, where I have for some time attended Mr Delvile, who has had a severe fit of the gout, I found him in an agitation of spirits that made me apprehend it would be thrown into his stomach. I desired Mrs Delvile to use her influence to calm him; but she was herself in still greater emotion, and acquainting me she was obliged to leave him, desired I would spend with him every moment in my power. I have therefore almost lived at the Castle during her absence, and, in the course of our many conversations, he has acknowledged to me the uneasiness under which he laboured, from the intelligence concerning his son, which he had just received."

Cecilia wished here to enquire *how* received, and from whom, but had not the courage, and therefore he proceeded.

"I was still with the father when Mr Mortimer arrived post at my house to fetch me hither. I was sent for home; he informed me of his errand without disguise, for he knew I was well acquainted with the original secret whence all the evil arose. I told him my distress in what manner to leave his father; and he was extremely shocked himself when acquainted with his situation. We agreed that

it

it would be vain to conceal from him the indisposition of Mrs Delvile, which the delay of her return, and a thousand other accidents, might in some unfortunate way make known to him. He commissioned me, therefore, to break it to him, that he might consent to my journey, and at the same time to quiet his own mind, by assuring him all he had apprehended was wholly at an end."

He stopt, and looked to see how Cecilia bore these words.

"It is all at an end, Sir;" said she, with firmness; "but I have not yet heard your commission; what, and from whom is that?"

"I am thoroughly satisfied it is unnecessary;" he answered, "since the young man can but submit, and you can but give him up."

"But still, if there is a message, it is fit I should hear it."

"If you choose it, so it is. I told Mr Delvile whither I was coming, and I repeated to him his son's assurances. He was relieved, but not satisfied; he would not see him, and gave me for him a prohibition of extreme severity,—and to *you* he bid me say—"

"From *him*, then, is my message?" cried Cecilia, half frightened, and much disappointed.

"Yes,

"Yes," said he, understanding her immediately, "for the son, after giving me his first account, had the wisdom and forbearance not once to mention you."

"I am very glad," said she, with a mixture of admiration and regret, "to hear it. But, what, Sir, said Mr Delvile?"

"He bid me tell you that either *he*, or *you* must see his son never more."

"It was indeed unnecessary," cried she, colouring with resentment, "to send me such a message. I meant not to see him again, he meant not to desire it. I return him, however, no answer, and I will make him no promise; to Mrs Delvile alone I hold myself bound; to him, send what messages he may, I shall always hold myself free. But believe me, Dr Lyster, if with his name, his son had inherited his character, his desire of our separation would be feeble, and trifling, compared with my own!"

"I am sorry, my good young lady," said he, "to have given you this disturbance; yet I admire your spirit, and doubt not but it will enable you to forget any little disappointment you may have suffered. And what, after all, have you to regret? Mortimer Delvile is, indeed, a young man that any woman might wish to attach; but every woman cannot have him, and you, of all women, have least reason to repine in missing him,

him, for scarcely is there another man you may not choose or reject at your pleasure."

Little as was the consolation Cecilia could draw from this speech, she was sensible it became not her situation to make complaints, and therefore, to end the conversation, she proposed calling in the Miss Charltons.

"No, no," said he, "I must step up again to Mrs Delvile, and then be-gone. To-morrow morning I shall but call to see how she is, and leave some directions, and set off. Mr Mortimer Delvile accompanies me back: but he means to return hither in a week, in order to travel with his mother to Bristol. Meantime, I purpose to bring about a reconciliation between him and his father, whose prejudices are more intractable than any man's I ever met with."

"It will be strange indeed," said Cecilia, "should a reconciliation *now* be difficult!"

"True; but it is long since he was young himself, and the softer affections he never was acquainted with, and only regards them in his son as derogatory to his whole race. However, if there were not some few such men, there would hardly be a family in the kingdom that could count a great grand-father. I am not, I must own, of his humour myself, but I think it rather peculiarly stranger, than peculiarly worse than most other people's; and how, for example, was that of *your* uncle a whit the better? He was just as fond

fond of *his* name, as if, like Mr Delvile, he could trace it from the time of the Saxons."

Cecilia strongly felt the truth of this observation, but not choosing to discuss it, made not any answer, and Dr Lyster, after a few good-natured apologies, both for his friends, the Delviles, and himself, went up stairs.

"What continual disturbance," cried she, when left alone, "keeps me thus forever from rest! no sooner is one wound closed, but another is opened; mortification constantly succeeds distress, and when my heart is spared my pride is attacked, that not a moment of tranquillity may ever be allowed me! Had the lowest of women won the affections of Mr Delvile, could his father with less delicacy or less decency have acquainted her with his inflexible disapprobation? To send with so little ceremony a message so contemptuous and so preeminent!—but perhaps it is better, for had he, too, like Mrs Delvile, joined kindness with rejection, I might still more keenly have felt the perverseness of my destiny."

C H A P. IV.

A PARTING.

THE next morning Dr Lyster called early, and having visited Mrs Delvile, and again met the two gentlemen of the faculty in whose care she was to remain, he took his leave. But not without contriving first to speak a few words to Cecilia in private, in which he charged her to be careful of her health, and re-animate her spirits. "Don't suppose," said he, "that because I am a friend of the Delvile family, I am either blind to your merits, or to their foibles, far from it; but then why should they interfere with one another? Let them keep their prejudices, which, though different, are not worse than their neighbours, and do you retain your excellencies, and draw from them the happiness which they ought to give you. People reason and refine themselves into a thousand miseries, by choosing to settle that they can only be contented one way; whereas, there are fifty ways, if they would but look about them, that would commonly do as well."

"I believe, indeed, you are right," answered Cecilia, "and I thank you for the admonition; I will do what I can towards studying

studying your scheme of philosophy, and it is always one step to amendment, to be convinced that we want it."

" You are a sensible and charming girl," said Dr Lyster, " and Mr Delvile, should he find a daughter-in-law, descended in a right line from Egbert, first king of all England, won't be so well off as if he had satisfied himself with you. However, the old gentleman has a fair right, after all, to be pleased his own way, and let us blame him how we will, we shall find, upon sifting, it is for no other reason but because his humour happens to clash with our own."

" That, indeed," said Cecilia, smiling, " is a truth incontrovertable! and a truth to which, for the future, I will endeavour to give more weight. But will you permit me now to ask one question? Can you tell me from whom, how, or when the intelligence which has caused all this disturbance—"

She hesitated, but, comprehending her readily, he answered, " How they got at it, I never heard, for I never thought it worth while to enquire, as it is so generally known, that nobody I meet with seems ignorant of it."

This was another, and a cruel shock to Cecilia, and Dr Lyster, perceiving it, again attempted to comfort her. " That the affair is somewhat spread," said he, " is now not to be helped, and therefore little worth

thinking of; every body will agree that the choice of both does honour to both, and nobody need be ashamed to be successor to either, whenever the course of things leads Mr Mortimer and yourself to make another election. He wisely intends to go abroad, and will not return till he is his own man again. And as to you, my good young lady, what, after a short time given to vexation, need interrupt your happiness? You have the whole world before you, with youth fortune, talents, beauty, and independence; drive, therefore, from your head this unlucky affair, and remember there can hardly be a family in the kingdom, this one excepted, that will not rejoice in a connection with you."

He then good-humouredly shook hands with her, and went into his chaise.

Cecilia, though not slow in remarking the ease and philosophy with which every one can argue upon the calamities, and moralize upon the misconduct of others, had still the candour and good sense to see that there was reason in what he urged, and to resolve upon making the best use in her power of the hints for consolation she might draw from his discourse.

During the following week, she devoted herself almost wholly to Mrs Delvile, sharing with the maid, whom she had brought with her from the Castle, the fatigue of nursing

nursing her, and leaving to the Miss Charltons the chief care of their grand-mother. For Mrs Delvile appeared every hour more sensible of her attention, and more desirous of her presence, and though neither of them spoke, each was endeared to the other by the tender offices of friendship which were paid and received.

When this week was expired, Dr Lyster was prevailed upon to return again to Bury, in order to travel himself with Mrs Delvile to Bristol. "Well," cried he, taking Cecilia by the first opportunity aside, "how are you? Have you studied my scheme of philosophy, as you promised me?"

"O yes," said she, "and made, I flatter myself, no little proficiency."

"You are a good girl," cried he, "a very extraordinary girl! I am sure you are; and upon my honour I pity poor Mortimer with all my soul! But he is a noble young fellow, and behaves with a courage and spirit that does me good to behold. To have obtained you, he would have moved heaven and earth, but finding you out of his reach, he submits to his fate like a man."

Cecilia's eyes glistened at this speech; "Yes," said she, "he long since said 'tis suspense, 'tis hope, that make the misery of life,—for there the passions have all power, and reason has none. But when evils are irremediable, and we have neither resources to

plan, nor castle-building to delude us, we find time for the cultivation of philosophy, and flatter ourselves, perhaps, that we have found inclination!"

"Why you have considered this matter very deeply," said he; "but I must not have you give way to these serious reflections. Thought, after all, has a cruel spite against happiness; I would have you, therefore, keep as much as you conveniently can, out of its company. Run about and divert yourself, 'tis all you have for it. The true art of happiness in this most whimsical world, seems nothing more nor less than this.—Let those who have leisure, find employment, and those who have business find leisure."

He then told her that Mr Delvile senior was much better, and no longer confined to his room: and that he had had the pleasure of seeing an entire reconciliation take place between him and his son, of whom he was more fond and more proud than any other father in the universe.

"Think of him, however, my dear young lady," he continued, "no more, for the matter I see is desperate: you must pardon my being a little officious, when I confess to you I could not help proposing to the old gentleman an expedient of my own; for as I could not drive you out of my head, I employed myself in thinking what might be done by way of accommodation. Now my scheme

was

was really a very good one, only when people are prejudiced, all reasoning is thrown away upon them. I proposed sinking *both* your names, since they are so at variance with one another, and so adopting a third, by means of a title. But Mr Delvile angrily declared, that though such a scheme might do very well for the needy Lord Ernolf, a Peer of twenty years, his own noble ancestors should never, by his consent, forfeit a name which so many centuries had rendered honourable. His son Mortimer, he added, must inevitably inherit the title of his grandfather, his uncle being old and unmarried; but yet he would rather see him a beggar, than lose his dearest hope that *Delvile*, Lord *Delvile*, would descend, both name and title, from generation to generation unfulfilled and uninterrupted."

"I am sorry, indeed," said Cecilia, "that such a proposal was made, and I earnestly entreat that none of any sort may be repeated."

"Well, well," said he, "I would not for the world do any mischief, but who would not have supposed such a proposal would have done good?"

"Mr Mortimer," he then added, "is to meet us at —, for he would not, he said, come again to this place, upon such terms as he was here last week, for the whole worth of the king's dominions."

The carriage was now ready, and Mrs Delvile was prepared to depart. Cecilia approached to take leave of her, but Dr Lyster following, said, "No talking! no thanking! no compliments of any sort! I shall carry off my patient without permitting one civil speech, and for all the rudeness I make her guilty of, I am willing to be responsible."

Cecilia would then have retreated, but Mrs Delvile, holding out both her hands, said, "To every thing else, Dr Lyster, I am content to submit; but were I to die while uttering the words, I cannot leave this estimable creature without first saying how much I love her, how I honour, and how I thank her! without entreating her to be careful of her health, and conjuring her to complete the greatness of her conduct, by not suffering her spirits to sink from the exertion of her virtue. And now, my love, God bless you!"

She then embraced her, and went on; Cecilia, at a motion of Dr Lyster's, forbearing to follow her.

"And thus," cried she, when they were gone, "thus ends all my connection with this family! which it seems as if I was only to have known for the purpose of affording a new proof of the insufficiency of situation to constitute happiness. Who looks not upon mine as the perfection of human felicity?—And so, perhaps, it is, for it may be that felicity

licity and humanity are never permitted to come nearer."

And thus, in philosophic sadness, by reasoning upon the universality of misery, she restrained, at least, all violence of sorrow, though her spirits were dejected, and her heart was heavy.

But the next day brought with it some comfort that a little lightened her sadness; Mrs Charlton, almost wholly recovered, was able to go down stairs, and Cecilia had at least the satisfaction of seeing an happy conclusion to an illness of which, with the utmost concern and regret, she considered herself as the cause. She attended her with the most unremitting assiduity, and being really very thankful, endeavoured to appear happy, and flattered herself that, by continual effort, the appearance in a short time would become reality.

Mrs Charlton retired early, and Cecilia accompanied her up stairs: and while she was with her, was informed that Mr Monckton was in the parlour.

The various, afflicting, and uncommon scenes in which she had been engaged since she last saw him, had almost wholly driven him from her remembrance, or when at any time he recurred to it, it was only to attribute the discontinuance of his visits to the offence she had given him, in refusing to

follow his advice by relinquishing her London expedition.

Full, therefore, of the mortifying transactions which had passed since their parting, and fearful of his enquiries into disgraces he had nearly foretold, she heard him announced with chagrin, and waited upon him in the most painful confusion.

Far different were the feelings of Mr Monckton ; he read in her countenance the dejection of disappointment, which impressed upon his heart the vivacity of hope : her evident shame was to him secret triumph, her ill-concealed sorrow revived all his expectations.

She hastily began a conversation by mentioning her debt to him, and apologising for not paying it the moment she was of age. He knew but too well how her time had been occupied, and assured her the delay was wholly immaterial.

He then led to an enquiry into the present situation of her affairs ; but unable to endure a disquisition, which could only be productive of censure and mortification, she hastily stopt it, exclaiming, “ Ask me not, I entreat you, Sir, any detail of what has passed,—the event has brought me sufferings that may well make blame dispensed with ;—I acknowledge all your wisdom, I am sensible of my own error, but the affair

is

is wholly dropt, and the unhappy connection I was forming is broken off for ever!"

Little now was Mr Monckton's effort in repressing his further curiosity, and he started other subjects with readiness, gaiety and address. He mentioned Mrs Charlton, for whom he had not the smallest regard ; he talked to her of Mrs Harrel, whose very existence was indifferent to him ; and he spoke of their common acquaintance in the country, for not one of whom he would have grieved, if assured of meeting no more. His powers of conversation were enlivened by his hopes ; and his exhilarated spirits made all subjects seem happy to him. A weight was removed from his mind which had nearly borne down even his remotest hopes ; the object of his eager pursuit seemed still within his reach, and the rival into whose power he had so lately almost beheld her delivered, was totally renounced, and no longer to be dreaded. A revolution such as this, raised expectations more sanguine than ever ; and in quitting the house, he exultingly considered himself released from every obstacle to his views—till, just as he arrived home, he recollect ed his wife !

C H A P. V.

A TALE.

A WEEK passed, during which Cecilia, however sad, spent her time as usual with the family, denying to herself all voluntary indulgence of grief, and forbearing to seek consolation from solitude, or relief from tears. She never named Delvile, she begged Mrs Charlton never to mention him; she called to her aid the account she had received from Dr Lyster of his firmness, and endeavoured, by an emulous ambition, to fortify her mind from the weakness of depression and regret.

This week, a week of struggle with all her feelings, was just elapsed, when she received by the post the following letter from Mrs Delvile.

To Miss BEVERLEY.

Bristol, Oct. 21..

MY sweet young friend will not, I hope, be sorry to hear of my safe arrival at this place: to me every account of her health and welfare, will ever be the intelligence I shall most

most covet to receive. Yet I mean not to ask for it in return ; to chance I will trust for information, and I only write now to say I shall write no more.

Too much for thanks is what I owe you, and what I think of you is beyond all power of expression. Do not, then, wish me ill, ill as I have seemed to merit of you, for my own heart is almost broken by the tyranny I have been compelled to practise upon yours.

And now let me bid a long adieu to you, my admirable Cecilia ; you shall not be tormented with a useless correspondence, which can only awaken painful recollections, or give rise to yet more painful new anxieties. Fervently will I pray for the restoration of your happiness, to which nothing can so greatly contribute as that wise, that uniform command, so feminine, yet so dignified, you maintain over your passions ; which often I have admired, though never so feelingly as at this conscious moment ! when my own health is the sacrifice of emotions most fatally unrestrained.

Send to me no answer, even if you have the sweetnes to wish it ; every new proof of the generosity of your nature is to me but a new wound. Forget us, therefore, wholly,—alas ! you have only known us for sorrow !—forget us, dear and invaluable Cecilia ! though ever, as you have nobly deserved, must you be fondly and gratefully remembered by

AUGUSTA DELVILLE.

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The attempted philosophy, and laboured resignation of Cecilia, this letter destroyed: the struggle was over, the apathy was at an end, and she burst into an agony of tears, which finding the vent they had long sought, now flowed unchecked down her cheeks, sad monitors of the weakness of reason opposed to the anguish of sorrow!

A letter at once so carefless, yet so absolute, forced its way to her heart, in spite of the fortitude she had flattered herself was its guard. In giving up Delvile she was satisfied of the propriety of seeing him no more, and convinced that even to talk of him would be folly and imprudence; but to be told that for the future they must remain strangers to the existence of each other—there seemed in this a hardship, a rigour, that was insupportable.

“Oh, what,” cried she, “is human nature! in its best state how imperfect! that a woman such as this, so noble in character, so elevated in sentiment, with heroism to sacrifice to her sense of duty the happiness of a son, whom with joy she would die to serve, can herself be thus governed by prejudice, thus enslaved, thus subdued by opinion!” Yet never, even when miserable, unjust or irrational; her grief was unmixed with anger, and her tears streamed not from resentment, but affliction. The situation of Mrs Delvile, however different, she considered to be as wretched as her own. She read, therefore,
with

with sadness, but not bitterness, her farewell, and received not with disdain, but with gratitude, her sympathy. Yet, though her indignation was not irritated, her sufferings were doubled, by a farewell so kind, yet so despotic; a sympathy so affectionate, yet so hopeless.

In this first indulgence of grief which she had granted to her disappointment, she was soon interrupted by a summons down stairs to a gentleman.

Unfit and unwilling to be seen, she begged that he might leave his name, and appoint a time for calling again.

Her maid brought for answer, that he believed his name was unknown to her, and desired to see her now, unless she was employed in some matter of moment.

She then put up her letter, and went into the parlour; and there, to her infinite amazement, beheld Mr Albany.

"How little, Sir," she cried, "did I expect this pleasure."

"This pleasure," repeated he, "do you call it?—what strange abuse of words! what causeless trifling with honesty! is language of no purpose but to wound the ear with untruths? Is the gift of speech only granted us to pervert the use of understanding? I can give you no pleasure, I have no power to give it any one; you can give none to me—the whole world could not invest you with the means!"

"Well,

" Well, Sir," said Cecilia, who had little spirit to defend herself, " I will not vindicate the expression, but of this I will unfeignedly assure you, I am at least as glad to see you just now, as I should be to see any body."

" Your eyes," cried he, " are red, your voice is inarticulate ;—young, rich, and attractive, the world at your feet ; that world yet untried, and its falsehood unknown, how have you thus found means to anticipate misery ? which way have you uncovered the cauldron of human woes? Fatal and early anticipation ! that cover once removed, can never be replaced ; those woes, those boiling woes, will pour out upon you continually, and only when your heart ceases to beat, will their ebullition cease to torture you!"

" Alas!" cried Cecilia, shuddering, " how cruel, yet how true!"

" Why went you," cried he, " to the cauldron ? it came not to you. Misery seeks not man, but man misery. He walks out in the sun, but stops not for a cloud ; confident, he pursues his way, till the storm which, gathering, he might have avoided, bursts over his devoted head. Scared and amazed, he repents his temerity ; he calls, but it is then too late ! he runs, but it is thunder which follows him ; Such is the presumption of man, such at once is the arrogance and shallowness of his nature ! And thou, simple and blind ! hast thou, too, followed whither fancy has led thee, unheeding

ing that thy career was too vehement for tranquillity, nor missing that lovely companion of youth's early innocence, till, adventurous and unthinking, thou hast lost her for ever!"

In the present weak state of Cecilia's spirits, this attack was too much for her; and the tears she had just, and with difficulty restrained, again forced their way down her cheeks, as she answered, "It is but too true, — I have lost her for ever!"

"Poor thing," said he while the rigour of his countenance was softened into the gentlest commiseration, "so young—looking, too, so innocent!—'tis hard!—And is nothing left thee? no small remaining hope, to cheat, humanely cheat, thy yet not wholly extinguished credulity?"

Cecilia wept without answering.

"Let me not," said he, "waste my compassion upon nothing; compassion is with me no effusion of affectation; tell me, then, if thou deservest it, or if thy misfortunes are imaginary, and thy grief is factitious?"

"Factitious," repeated she, "Good heaven!"

"Answer me, then, these questions, in which I shall comprise the only calamities for which sorrow has no controul, or none from human motives. Tell me, then, have you lost by death the friend of your bosom?"

"No!"

"Is

" Is your fortune dissipated by extravagance, and your power of relieving the distressed at an end?"

" No; the power and the will are I hope equally undiminished."

" O, then, unhappy girl! have you been guilty of some vice, and hangs remorse thus heavy on your conscience?"

" No, no; thank heaven, to that misery at least, I am a stranger!"

His countenance now again resumed its severity, and, in the sternest manner, " Whence then," he said, " these tears? and what is this caprice you dignify with the name of sorrow? —strange wantonness of indolence and luxury! perverse repining of ungrateful plenitude!—oh hadst thou known what *I* have suffered!"

" Could I lessen what you have suffered," said Cecilia, " I should sincerely rejoice; but heavy indeed must be your affliction, if mine in its comparison deserves to be styled caprice!"

" Caprice!" repeated he, " 'tis joy! 'tis extacy compared with mine!—Thou hast not in licentiousness wasted thy inheritance! thou hast not by remorse barred each avenue to enjoyment! nor yet has the cold grave seized the beloved of thy soul!"

" Neither," said Cecilia, " I hope, are the evils you have yourself sustained so irremediable?"

" Yes,

" Yes, I have borne them all!—*have* borne? I bear them still; I shall bear them while I breathe! I may rue them, perhaps, yet longer."

" Good God!" cried Cecilia, shrinking, " what a world is this! how full of woe and wickedness!"

" Yet thou, too, canst complain," cried he, " though happy in life's only blessing, Innocence! thou, too, canst murmur, though stranger to death's only terror, Sin! O yet, if thy sorrow is unpolluted with guilt, be regardless of all else, and rejoice in thy destiny!"

" But who," cried she, deeply sighing, " shall teach me such a lesson of joy, when all within rises to oppose it?"

" I," cried he, " will teach it thee, for I will tell thee my own sad story. Then wilt thou find how much happier is thy lot, then wilt thou raise thy head in thankful triumph."

" O, no! triumph comes not so lightly!—yet if you will venture to trust me with some account of yourself, I shall be glad to hear it, and much obliged by the communication."

" I will," he answered, " whatever I may suffer: to awaken thee from this dream of fancied sorrow, I will open all my wounds, and thou shalt probe them with fresh shame."

" No, indeed," cried Cecilia with quickness, " I will not hear you, if the relation will be so painful."

" Upon

"Upon *me* this humanity is lost," said he, "since punishment and penitence alone give me comfort. I will tell thee, therefore, my crimes, that thou mayest know thy own felicity, lest, ignorant it means nothing but innocence, thou shouldst lose it, unconscious of its value. Listen then to me, and learn what misery is! Guilt is alone the basis of lasting unhappiness; guilt is the basis of mine, and therefore I am a wretch for ever!"

Cecilia would have again declined hearing him, but he refused to be spared: and as her curiosity had long been excited to know something of his history, and the motives of his extraordinary conduct, she was glad to have it satisfied, and gave him the utmost attention.

"I will not speak to you of my family," said he, "historical accuracy would little answer to either of us. I am a native of the West Indies, and I was early sent hither to be educated. While I was yet at the University, I saw, I adored, and I pursued the fairest flower that ever put forth its sweet buds, the softest heart that ever was broken by ill usage! She was poor and unprotected, the daughter of a villager; she was untaught and unpretending, the child of simplicity! But fifteen summers had she bloomed, and her heart was an easy conquest; yet, once made mine, it resisted all allurement to infidelity. My fellow students attacked her; she was assaulted by all the arts seduction; flattery, bribery, suppli-

supplication, all were employed, yet all failed; she was wholly my own; and with sincerity so attractive, I determine to marry her in defiance of all worldly objections.

“ The sudden death of my father called me hastily to Jamaica; I feared leaving this treasure unguarded, yet in decency could neither marry nor take her directly; I pledged my faith, therefore, to return to her, as soon as I had settled my affairs, and I left to a bosom friend the inspection of her conduct in my absence.

“ To leave her was madness,—to trust in man was madness.—O, hateful race! how has the world been abhorrent to me since that time! I have loathed the light of the sun, I have shrunk from the commerce of my fellow-creatures; the voice of man I have detested, his sight I have abominated!—but oh, more than all should I be abominated myself!

“ When I came to my fortune, intoxicated with sudden power, I forgot this fair blossom, I revelled in licentiousness and vice, and left it exposed and forlorn. Riot succeeded riot, till a fever, incurred by my own intemperance, first gave me time to think. Then was she revenged, for then first remorse was my portion: her image was brought back to my mind with frantic fondness, and bitterest contrition. The moment I recovered, I returned to England; I flew to claim her,—but she was lost! no one knew whither she was

was gone; the wretch I had trusted pretended to know least of all; yet, after a furious search, I traced her to a cottage, where he had concealed her himself!

“ When she saw me, she screamed and would have flown; I stopt her, and told her I came faithfully and honourably to make her my wife:—her own faith and honour, though fullied, were not extinguished, for she instantly acknowledged the fatal tale of her undoing!

“ Did I recompense this ingenuousness? this unexampled, this beautiful sacrifice to intuitive integrity! Yes, with my curses!—I loaded her with execrations, I reviled her in language the most opprobrious, I insulted her even for her confession! I invoked all evil upon her from the bottom of my heart!—She knelt at my feet, she implored my forgiveness and compassion, she wept with the bitterness of despair,—and yet I spurned her from me!—Spurned?—let me not hide my shame! I barbarously struck her!—nor single was the blow!—it was doubled, it was reiterated!—Oh wretch, unyielding and unpitying!—where shall hereafter be clemency for thee!—So fair a form! so young a culprit! so infamously seduced! so humbly penitent!

“ In this miserable condition, helpless and deplorable, mangled by these savage hands, and reviled by this inhuman tongue, I left her, in search of the villain who had destroyed her: but, cowardly as treacherous, he had absconded

absconded. Repenting my fury, I hastened to her again; the fierceness of my cruelty shamed me when I grew calmer, the softness of her sorrow melted me upon recollection: I returned, therefore, to soothe her,—but again she was gone! terrified with expectation of insult, she hid herself from all my enquiries. I wandered in search of her two long years to no purpose, regardless of my affairs, and of all things but that pursuit.—At length, I thought I saw her—in London, alone, and walking in the streets at midnight.—I fearfully followed her,—and followed her into an house of infamy!

“The wretches by whom she was surrounded were noisy and drinking, they heeded me little,—but she saw and knew me at once!—She did not speak, nor did I,—but in two moments she fainted, and fell.

“Yet did I not help her; the people took their own measures to recover her, and when she was again able to stand, would have removed her to another apartment.

“I then went forward, and forcing them away from her with all the strength of desperation, I turned to the unhappy sinner, who to chance only seemed to leave what became of her, and cried, From this scene of vice and horror let me yet rescue you! you look still unfit for such society, trust yourself, therefore, to me. I seized her hand, I drew, I almost dragged her away. She trembled, she could

scarce

scarce totter, but neither consented nor refused, neither shed a tear, nor spoke a word, and her countenance presented a picture of affright, amazement, and horror.

" I took her to a house in the country, each of us silent the whole way. I gave her an apartment, and a female attendant, and ordered for her every convenience I could suggest. I staid myself in the same house, but distracted with remorse for the guilt and ruin into which I had terrified her, I could not bear her sight.

" In a few days her maid assured me the life she led must destroy her; that she would taste nothing but bread and water, never spoke, and never slept.

" Alarmed by this account, I flew into her apartment; pride and resentment gave way to pity and fondness, and I besought her to take comfort. I spoke, however, to a statue, she replied not, nor seemed to hear me. I then humbled myself to her as in the days of her innocence and first power, supplicating her notice, entreating even her commiseration! all was to no purpose; she neither received nor repulsed me, and was alike inattentive to exhortation and to prayer.

" Whole hours did I spend at her feet, vowed never to arise till she spoke to me,—all, all, in vain! she seemed deaf, mute, insensible; her face unmoved, a settled despair fixed in her eyes,—those eyes that had never looked

at

at me but with dove-like softness and compliance!—She sat constantly in one chair, she never changed her dress, no persuasions could prevail with her to lie down, and at meals she just swallowed so much dry bread as might save her from dying for want of food.

“ What was the distraction of my soul, to find her bent upon this course to her last hour!—quick came that hour, but never will it be forgotten! rapidly it was gone, but eternally it will be remembered!

“ When she felt herself expiring, she acknowledged she had made a vow, upon entering the house, to live speechless and motionless, as a penance for her offences!

“ I kept her loved corpse till my own senses failed me,—it was then only torn from me,—and I have lost all recollection of three years of my existence!”

Cecilia shuddered at this hint, yet was not surprised by it; Mr Gosport had acquainted her he had been formerly confined; and his flightiness, wildness, florid language, and extraordinary way of life, had long led her to suspect his reason had been impaired.

“ The scene to which my memory first leads me back,” he continued, “ is visiting her grave; solemnly upon it I returned her vow, though not by one of equal severity. To her poor remains did I pledge myself, that the day should never pass in which I would receive nourishment, nor the night come in which

which I would take rest, till I had done, or zealously attempted to do, some service to a fellow-creature.

“ For this purpose have I wandered from city to city, from the town to the country, and from the rich to the poor. I go into every house where I can gain admittance, I admonish all who will hear me, I shame even those who will not. I seek the distressed wherever they are hid, I follow the prosperous to beg a mite to serve them. I look for the Dissipated in public, where, amidst their licentiousness, I check them; I pursue the Unhappy in private, where I counsel and endeavour to assist them. My own power is small; my relations, during my sufferings, limiting me to an annuity; but there is no one I scruple to solicit, and by zeal I supply ability.

“ O, life of hardship and penance! laborious, toilsome, and restless! but I have merited no better, and I will not repine at it; I have vowed that I will endure it, and I will not be forsaken.

“ One indulgence alone from time to time I allow myself,—’tis music! which has power to delight me even to rapture! it quiets all anxiety, it carries me out of myself, I forget through it every calamity, even the bitterest anguish.

“ Now then, that thou hast heard me, tell me, hast thou cause of sorrow?”

“ Alas,”

"Alas," cried Cecilia, "this indeed is a picture of misery to make *my* lot seem all happiness!"

"Art thou thus open to conviction?" cried he, mildly; "and dost thou not fly the voice of truth! for truth and reproof are one."

"No, I would rather seek it; I feel myself wretched, however inadequate may be the cause; I wish to be more resigned, and if you can instruct me how, I shall thankfully attend to you."

"Oh yet uncorrupted creature!" cried he, "with joy will I be thy monitor,—joy long untasted! Many have I wished to serve; all, hitherto, have rejected my offices; too honest to flatter them, they had not the fortitude to listen to me! too low to advance them, they had not the virtue to bear with me. You alone have I yet found pure enough not to fear inspection, and good enough to wish to be better. Yet words alone will not content me; I must also have deeds. Nor will your purse, however readily opened, suffice; you must give to me also your time and your thoughts; for money sent by others, to others only will afford relief; to lighten your own cares, you must distribute it yourself."

"You shall find me," said she, "a docile pupil, and most glad to be instructed how my existence may be useful."

"Happy then," cried he, "was the hour that brought me to this county; yet not in

search of you did I come, but of the mutable and ill-fated Belfield. Erring, yet ingenuous young man! what a lesson to the vanity of talents, to the gaiety, the brilliancy of wit, is the sight of that green fallen plant! not sapless by age, nor withered by disease, but destroyed by want of pruning, and bending, breaking by its own luxuriance!"

" And where, Sir, is he now?"

" Labouring wilfully in the field, with those who labour compulsorily; such are we all by nature, discontented, perverse, and changeable; though all have not courage to appear so, and few, like Belfield, are worth watching when they do. He told me he was happy; I knew it could not be: but his employment was inoffensive, and I left him without reproach. In this neighbourhood I heard of you, and found your name was coupled with praise. I came to see if you deserved it; I have seen, and am satisfied."

" You are not, then, very difficult, for I have yet done nothing. How are we to begin these operations you propose? You have awakened me by them to an expectation of pleasure, which nothing else, I believe, could just now have given me."

" We will work," cried he, " together, till not a woe shall remain upon your mind. The blessings of the fatherless, the prayers of little children, shall heal all your wounds with balm of sweetest fragrance. When sad, they

they shall cheer, when complaining, they shall soothe you. We will go to their roofless houses, and see them repaired; we will exclude from their dwellings the inclemency of the weather; we will clothe them from cold, we will rescue them from hunger. The cries of distress shall be changed to notes of joy: your heart shall be enraptured, mine, too shall revive—Oh, whither am I wandering? I am painting an Elysium! and while I idly speak, some fainting object dies for want of succour! Farewell; I will fly to the abodes of wretchedness, and come to you to-morrow to render them the abodes of happiness."

He then went away.

This singular visit was for Cecilia most fortunately timed: it almost surprised her out of her peculiar grief, by the view which it opened to her of general calamity; wild, flighty and imaginative as were his language and his counsels, their morality was striking, and their benevolence was affecting. Taught by him to compare her state with that of at least half her species, she began more candidly to weigh what was left with what was withdrawn, and found the balance in her favour. The plan he had presented to her of good works was consonant to her character and inclinations: and the active charity in which he proposed to engage her, re-animated her fallen hopes, though to far different subjects from those which had depressed them. Any scheme of worldly

happiness would have sickened and disgusted her; but her mind was just in the situation to be impressed with elevated piety, and to adopt any design in which virtue humoured melancholy.

C H A P. V.

A S H O C K.

C E C I L I A passed the rest of the day in fanciful projects of beneficence; she determined to wander with her romantic new ally whithersoever he would lead her, and to spare neither fortune, time, nor trouble, in seeking and relieving the distressed. Not all her attempted philosophy had calmed her mind like this plan; in merely refusing indulgence to grief, she had only locked it up in her heart, where eternally struggling for vent, she was almost overpowered by restraining it; but now her affliction had no longer her whole faculties to itself; the hope of doing good, the pleasure of easing pain, the intention of devoting her time to the service of the unhappy, once more delighted her imagination,—that source of promissory enjoyment, which though often obstructed, is never, in youth, exhausted.

She

She would not give Mrs Charlton the unnecessary pain of hearing the letter with which she had been so much affected, but she told her of the visit of Albany, and pleased her with the account of their scheme.

At night, with less sadness than usual, she retired to rest. In her sleep she bestowed riches, and poured plenty upon the land; she humbled the oppressor, she exalted the oppressed; slaves were raised to dignities, captives restored to liberty; beggars saw smiling abundance, and wretchedness was banished the world. From a cloud in which she was supported by angels, Cecilia beheld these wonders, and while enjoying the glorious illusion, she was awakened by her maid, with news that Mrs Charlton was dying!

She started up, and, undressed, was running to her apartment,—when the maid, calling to stop her, confessed she was already dead!

She had made her exit in the night, but the time was not exactly known; her own maid, who slept in the room with her, going early to her bedside to enquire how she did, found her cold and motionless, and could only conclude that a paralytic stroke had taken her off.

Happily and in good time had Cecilia been somewhat recruited by one night of refreshing slumbers and flattering dreams, for the shock she now received promised her not soon another.

She lost in Mrs Charlton a friend, whom nearly from her infancy she had considered as a mother, and by whom she had been cherished with tenderness almost unequalled. She was not a woman of bright parts, or much cultivation, but her heart was excellent, and her disposition was amiable. Cecilia had known her longer than her memory could look back, though the earliest circumstances she could trace were kindnesses received from her. Since she had entered into life, and found the difficulty of the part she had to act, to this worthy old lady alone had she unbosomed her secret cares. Though little assisted by her counsel, she was always certain of her sympathy; and while her own superior judgment directed her conduct, she had the relief of communicating her schemes, and weighing her perplexities, with a friend to whom nothing that concerned her was indifferent, and whose greatest wish and chief pleasure was the enjoyment of her conversation.

If left to herself, in the present period of her life, Mrs Charlton had certainly not been the friend of her choice. The delicacy of her mind, and the refinement of her ideas, had now rendered her fastidious, and she would have looked out for elegancies and talents to which Mrs Charlton had no pretensions: but those who live in the country have little power of selection; confined to a small circle, they must be content with what it offers;

fers; and however they may idolize extraordinary merit when they meet with it, they must not regard it as essential to friendship, for in their circumscribed rotation, whatever may be their discontent, they can make but little change.

Such had been the situation to which Mrs Charlton and Mrs Harrel owed the friendship of Cecilia. Greatly their superior in understanding and intelligence, had the candidates for her favour been more numerous, the election had not fallen upon either of them. But she became known to both before discrimination made her difficult, and when her enlightened mind discerned their deficiencies, they had already an interest in her affections, which made her see them with lenity: and though sometimes, perhaps, conscious she should not have chosen them from many, she adhered to them with sincerity, and would have changed them for none.

Mrs Harrel, however, too weak for similar sentiments, forgot her when out of sight, and by the time they met again, was insensible to every thing but shew and dissipation. Cecilia shocked and surprised, first grieved from disappointed affection, and then lost that affection in angry contempt. But her fondness for Mrs Charlton had never known abatement, as the kindness which had excited it had never known allay. She had loved her first from childish gratitude; but that love,

strengthened and confirmed by confidential intercourse, was now as sincere and affectionate as if it had originated from sympathetic admiration. Her loss, therefore, was felt with the utmost severity, and neither seeing nor knowing any means of replacing it, she considered it as irreparable, and mourned it with bitterness.

When the first surprize of this cruel stroke was somewhat lessened, she sent an express to Mr Monckton with the news, and entreated to see him immediately. He came without delay, and she begged his counsel what step she ought herself to take in consequence of this event. Her own house was still unprepared for her; she had of late neglected to hasten the workmen, and almost forgotten her intention of entering it. It was necessary, however, to change her abode immediately; she was no longer in the house of Mrs Charlton, but of her grand-daughters and co-heiresses, each of whom she disliked, and upon neither of whom she had any claim.

Mr Monckton then, with the quickness of a man who utters a thought at the very moment of its projection, mentioned a scheme, upon which during his whole ride he had been ruminating; which was, that she would instantly remove to his house, and remain there till settled to her satisfaction.

Cecilia objected her little right of surprising Lady Margaret; but, without waiting to discuss

cuss it, lest new objections should arise, he quitted her, to fetch himself from her ladyship an invitation he meant to insist upon her sending.

Cecilia, though heartily disliking this plan, knew not at present what better to adopt, and thought any thing preferable to going again to Mrs Harrel, since that only could be done by feeding the anxiety of Mr Arnot.

Mr Monckton soon returned with a message of his own fabrication ; for his lady, though obliged to receive whom he pleased, took care to guard inviolate the independence of speech, fullenly persevering in refusing to say any thing, or perversely saying only what he least wished to hear.

Cecilia then took a hasty leave of the Miss Charltons, who, little affected by what they had lost, and eager to examine what they had gained, parted from her gladly, and with a heavy heart and weeping eyes, borrowed for the last time the carriage of her late worthy old friend, and for ever quitting her hospitable house, sorrowfully set out for the Grove.

CHAP. VII.

A COGITATION.

LADY Margaret Monckton received Cecilia with the most gloomy coldness; she apologized for the liberty she had taken in making use of her ladyship's house, but, meeting no return of civility, she withdrew to the room which had been prepared for her, and resolved as much as possible to keep out of her sight.

It now became necessary without farther delay to settle her plan of life, and fix her place of residence. The forbidding looks of Lady Margaret made her hasten her resolves, which otherwise would for a while have given way to grief for her recent misfortune.

She sent for the surveyor who had the superintendance of her estates, to enquire how soon her own house would be fit for her reception; and heard there was yet work for near two months.

This answer made her very uncomfortable. To continue two months under the roof with Lady Margaret was a penance she could not enjoin herself, nor was she at all sure Lady Margaret would submit to it any better: she determined therefore to release herself from the

the conscious burthen of being an unwelcome visitor, by boarding with some creditable family at Bury, and devoting the two months in which she was to be kept from her house, to a general arrangement of her affairs, and a final settling with her guardians.

For these purposes it would be necessary she should go to London: but with whom, or in what manner, she could not decide. She desired, therefore, another conference with Mr Monckton, who met her in the parlour.

She then communicated to him her schemes; and begged his counsel in her perplexities.

He was delighted at the application, and extremely well pleased with her design of boarding at Bury, well knowing, he could then watch and visit her at his pleasure, and have far more comfort in her society than even in his own house, where all the vigilance with which he observed her was short of that with which he was himself observed by Lady Margaret. He endeavoured, however, to dissuade her from going to town, but her eagerness to pay the large sum she owed him, was now too great to be conquered. Of age, her fortune wholly in her power, and all attendance upon Mrs Charlton at an end, she had no longer any excuse for having a debt in the world, and would suffer no persuasion to make her begin her career in life, with a negligence in settling her accounts which she

had so often censured in others. To go to London, therefore, she was fixed, and all that she desired was his advice concerning the journey.

He then told her, that in order to settle with her guardians, she must write to them in form, to demand an account of the sums that had been expended during her minority, and announce her intention for the future to take the management of her fortune into her own hands.

She immediately followed his directions, and consented to remain at the Grove till their answers arrived.

Being now, therefore, unavoidably fixed for some time at the house, she thought it proper and decent to attempt softening Lady Margaret in her favour. She exerted all her powers to please and to oblige her; but the exertion was necessarily vain, not only from the disposition, but the situation of her ladyship, since every effort made for this conciliatory purpose, rendered her doubly amiable in the eyes of her husband, and consequently to herself more odious than ever. Her jealousy, already but too well founded, received every hour the poisonous nourishment of fresh conviction, which so much soured and exasperated a temper naturally harsh, that her malignity and ill-humour grew daily more acrimonious. Nor would she have contented herself with displaying this irascibility by general morose-

moroseness, had not the same suspicious watchfulness which discovered to her the passion of her husband, served equally to make manifest the indifference and innocence of Cecilia ; to reproach her, therefore, she had not any pretence, though her knowledge how much she had to dread her, passed current in her mind for sufficient reason to hate her. The Angry and the Violent use little discrimination ;— whom they like, they enquire not if they approve ; but whoever, no matter how unwittingly, stands in their way, they scruple not to ill-use, and conclude they may laudably detest.

Cecilia, though much disgusted, gave not over her attempt, which she considered but as her due while she continued in her house. Her general character, also, for peevishness and haughty ill-breeding, skilfully, from time to time, displayed, and artfully repined at by Mr Monckton, still kept her from suspecting any peculiar animosity to herself, and made her impute all that passed to the mere rancour of ill-humour. She confined herself, however, as much as possible, to her own apartment, where her sorrow for Mrs Charlton almost hourly increased, by the comparison she was forced upon making of her house with the Grove.

That worthy old lady left her grand daughters her co-heiresses and sole executrices. She bequeathed from them nothing considerable, though

though she left some donations for the poor, and several of her friends were remembered by small legacies. Among them Cecilia had her picture, and favourite trinkets, with a paragraph in her will, that as there was no one she so much loved, had her fortune been less splendid, she should have shared with her grand-daughters whatever she had to bestow.

Cecilia was much affected by this last and solemn remembrance. She more than ever coveted to be alone, that she might grieve undisturbed, and lamented without ceasing the fatigue and the illness which, in so late a period, as it proved, of her life, she had herself been the means of occasioning to her.

Mr Monckton had too much prudence to interrupt this desire of solitude, which indeed cost him little pain, as he considered her least in danger when alone. She received in about a week answers from both her guardians. Mr Delvile's letter was closely to the purpose, without a word but of business, and couched in the haughtiest terms. As he had never, he said, acted, he had no accounts to send in; but as he was going to town in a few days, he would see her for a moment in the presence of Mr Briggs, that a joint release might be signed, to prevent any future application to him.

Cecilia much lamented there was any necessity for her seeing him at all, and looked forward

forward to the interview as the greatest mortification she could suffer.

Mr Briggs, though still more concise, was far kinder in his language: but he advised her to defer her scheme of taking the money into her own hands, assuring her she would be cheated, and had better leave it to him.

When she communicated these epistles to Mr Monckton, he failed not to read, with an emphasis, by which his arrogant meaning was still more arrogantly enforced, the letter of Mr Delvile aloud. Nor was he sparing in comments that might render it yet more offensive. Cecilia neither concurred in what he said, nor opposed it, but contented herself, when he was silent, with producing the other letter.

Mr Monckton read not this with more favour. He openly attacked the character of Briggs, as covetous, rapacious, and over-reaching, and warned her by no means to abide by his counsel, without first taking the opinion of some disinterested person. He then stated the various arts which might be practised upon her inexperience, enumerated the dangers to which her ignorance of business exposed her, and annotated upon the cheats, double dealings, and tricks of stock-jobbing, to which he assured her Mr Briggs owed all he was worth, till, perplexed and confounded, she declared herself at a loss how to proceed,

ceed, and earnestly regretted that she could not have his counsel upon the spot.

This was his aim : to draw the wish from her, drew all suspicion of selfish views from himself: and he told her that he considered her present situation as so critical, the future confusion or regularity of her money-transactions seeming to depend upon it, that he would endeavour to arrange his affairs for meeting her in London.

Cecilia gave him many thanks for the kind intention, and determined to be totally guided by him in the disposal and direction of her fortune.

Mean time he had now another part to act; he saw that with Cecilia nothing more remained to be done, and that, harbouring not a doubt of his motives, she thought his design in her favour did her nothing but honour ; but he had too much knowledge of the world to believe it would judge him in the same manner, and too much consciousness of duplicity to set its judgment at defiance. To parry, therefore, the conjectures which might follow his attending her, he had already prepared Lady Margaret to wish herself of the party : for however disagreeable to him was her presence and her company, he had no other means to be under the same roof with Cecilia.

Miss Bennet, the wretched tool of his various schemes, and the mean sycophant of his lady,

lady, had been employed by him to work upon her jealousy, by secretly informing her of his intention to go to town, at the same time that Cecilia went thither to meet her guardians. She pretended to have learned this intelligence by accident, and to communicate it from respectful regard; and advised her to go to London herself at the same time, that she might see into his designs, and be some check upon his pleasure.

The increasing infirmities of Lady Margaret made this counsel by no means palatable: but Miss Bennet, following the artful instructions which she received, put in her way so strong a motive, by assuring her how little her company was wished, that in the madness of her spite she determined upon the journey. And little heeding how she tormented herself while she had any view of tormenting Mr Monckton, she was led on by her false confidant to invite Cecilia to her town house.

Mr Monckton, in whom, by long practice, artifice was almost nature, well knowing his wife's perverseness, affected to look much disconcerted at the proposal; while Cecilia, by no means thinking it necessary to extend her compliance to such a punishment, instantly made an apology, and declined the invitation.

Lady Margaret, little versed in civility, and unused to the arts of persuasion, could not,

not, even for a favourite project, prevail upon herself to use entreaty, and therefore, thinking her scheme defeated, looked gloomily disappointed, and said nothing more.

Mr Monckton saw with delight how much this difficulty inflamed her, though the moment he could speak alone with Cecilia he made it his care to remove it.

He represented to her that, however privately she might live, she was too young to be in London-lodgings by herself, and gave an hint which she could not but understand, that in going or in staying with only servants, suspicions might soon be raised, that the plan and motive of her journey were different to those given out.

She knew that he meant to insinuate, that it would be conjectured she designed to meet Delvile, and though colouring, vexed and provoked at the suggestion, the idea was sufficient to frighten her into his plan.

In a few days, therefore, the matter was wholly arranged, Mr Monckton, by his skill and address, leading every one whither he pleased, while by the artful coolness of his manner, he appeared but to follow himself. He set out the day before, though earnestly wishing to accompany them, but having as yet in no single instance gone to town in the same carriage with Lady Margaret, he dared trust neither the neighbourhood nor the servants

vants with so dangerous a subject for their comments.

Cecilia, compelled thus to travel with only her Ladyship and Miss Bennet, had a journey the most disagreeable: and determined, if possible, to stay in London but two days. She had already fixed upon a house in which she could board at Bury when she returned, and there she meant quietly to reside till she could enter her own.

Lady Margaret herself, exhilarated by a notion of having outwitted her husband, was in unusual good spirits, and almost in good humour. The idea of thwarting his designs, and being in the way of his entertainment, gave to her a delight she had seldom received from any thing; and the belief that this was effected by the superiority of her cunning, doubled her contentment, and raised it to exultation. She owed him, indeed, much provocation and uneasiness, and was happy in this opportunity of paying her arrears.

Meanwhile, that consummate master in every species of hypocrisy indulged her in this notion, by the air of dissatisfaction with which he left the house. It was not that she meant by her presence to obviate any impropriety: early and long acquainted with the character of Cecilia, she well knew, that during her life the passion of her husband

must

must be confined to his own breast : but conscious of his aversion to herself, which she resented with the bitterest ill-will, and knowing how little, at any time, he desired her company, she consoled herself for her inability to give pleasure by the power she possessed of giving pain, and bore with the fatigue of a journey disagreeable and inconvenient to her, with no other view than the hope of breaking into his plan of avoiding her. Little imagining that the whole time she was forwarding his favourite pursuit, and only acting the part which he had appointed her to perform.

C H A P. VIII.

A S U R P R I S E.

LADY Margaret's town house was in Soho-square ; and scarcely had Cecilia entered it, before her desire to speed her departure, made her send a note to each of her guardians, acquainting them of her arrival, and begging, if possible, to see them the next day.

She had soon the two following answers:
To

To Miss CECILIA BEVERLEY.

These.

November 8, 1779.

Miss,

Received your's of the same date ; can't come to - morrow. Will, Wednesday the 10th.

Am, &c.

JN^o. BRIGGS.

Miss Cecilia Beverley.

To Miss BEVERLEY.

Mr Delvile has too many affairs of importance upon his hands, to make any appointment till he has deliberated how to arrange them. Mr Delvile will acquaint Miss Beverley when it shall be in his power to see her.

St James's-square, Nov. 8.

These characteristic letters, which at another time might have diverted Cecilia, now merely served to torment her. She was eager to quit town, she was more eager to have her meeting with Mr Delvile over, who, oppressive to her even when he meant to be kind, she foresaw, now he was in wrath, would be imperious even to rudeness. Desirous, however, to make one interview suffice for both, and to settle whatever business might

might remain unfinished by letters, she again wrote to Mr Briggs, whom she had not spirits to encounter without absolute necessity, and informing him of Mr Delvile's delay, begged he would not trouble himself to call till he heard from her again.

Two days passed without any message from them; they were spent chiefly alone, and very uncomfortably, Mr Monckton being content to see little of her, while he knew she saw nothing of any body else. On the third morning, weary of her own thoughts, weary of Lady Margaret's ill-humoured looks, and still more weary of Miss Bennet's parasitical conversation, she determined, for a little relief to the heaviness of her mind, to go to her bookseller, and look over and order into the country such new publications as seemed to promise her any pleasure.

She sent, therefore, for a chair, and glad to have devised for herself any amusement, set out in it immediately.

Upon entering the shop, she saw the Bookseller engaged in close conference with a man meanly dressed, and much muffled up, who seemed talking to him with uncommon earnestness, and just as she was approaching, said, "To terms I am indifferent, for writing is no labour to me; on the contrary, it is the first delight of my life, and therefore, and not for dirty pelf, I wish to make it my profession."

The

The speech struck Cecilia, but the voice struck her more, it was Belfield's! and her amazement was so great, that she stopt short to look at him, without heeding a man who attended her, and desired to know her commands.

The Bookseller now perceiving her, came forward, and Belfield, turning to see who interrupted them, started as if a spectre had crossed his eyes, flapped his hat over his face, and hastily went out of the shop.

Cecilia checking her inclination to speak to him, from observing his eagerness to escape her, soon recollect ed her own errand, and employed herself in looking over new books.

Her surprize, however, at a change so sudden in the condition of this young man, and at a declaration of a passion for writing, so opposite to all the sentiments which he had professed at their late meeting in the cottage, awakened in her a strong curiosity to be informed of his situation; and after putting aside some books which she desired to have packed up for her, she asked if the gentleman who had just left the shop, and who she found by what he had said, was an Author, had written any thing that was published with his name?

"No, ma'am," answered the Bookseller, "nothing of any consequence; he is known, however, to have written several things that have appeared as anonymous; and I fancy, now,

now, soон, we shall see something considerable from him."

" He is about some great work then?"

" Why no, not exactly that, perhaps, at present ; we must feel our way with some little smart *jeu d'esprit* before we undertake a great work. But he is a very great genius, and I doubt not will produce something extraordinary."

" Whatever he produces," said Cecilia, " as I have now chanced to see him, I shall be glad you will, at any time, send to me."

" Certainly, ma'am; but it must be among other things, for he does not chuse, just now, to be known : and it is a rule in our business never to tell peoples names when they desire to be secret. He is a little out of cash just now, as you may suppose by his appearance, so instead of buying books, he comes to sell them. However, he has taken a very good road to bring himself home again, for we pay very handsomely for things of any merit, especially if they deal smartly in a few touches of the times."

Cecilia chose not to risk any further questions, lest her knowledge of him should be suspected, but got into her chair, and returned to Lady Margaret's.

The sight of Belfield reminded her not only of himself ; the gentle Henrietta again took her place in her memory, whence her various distresses and suspences had of late driven

driven from it every body but Delvile, and those whom Delvile brought into it. But her regard for that amiable girl, though sunk in the busy scenes of her calamitous uncertainties, was only sunk in her own bosom, and ready, upon their removal, to revive with fresh vigour. She was now indeed more unhappy than even in the period of her forgetfulness, yet her mind was no longer filled with the restless turbulence of hope, which still more than despondency unfitted it for thinking of others.

This remembrance thus awakened, awakened also a desire of renewing the connection so long neglected. All scruples concerning Delvile had now lost their foundation, since the doubts from which they arose were both explained and removed; she was certain alike of his indifference to Henrietta, and his separation from herself; she knew that nothing was to be feared from painful or offensive rivalry, and she resolved, therefore, to lose no time in seeking the first pleasure to which since her disappointment she had voluntarily looked forward.

Early in the evening, she told Lady Margaret she was going out for an hour or two, and sending again for a chair, was carried to Portland-street.

She enquired for Miss Belfield, and was shewn into a parlour, where she found her

drinking tea with her mother, and Mr Hobson, their landlord.

Henrietta almost screamed at her sight, from a sudden impulse of joy and surprise, and, running up to her, flung her arms round her neck, and embraced her with the most rapturous emotion: but then, drawing back with a look of timidity and shame, she bashfully apologized for her freedom, saying, "Indeed, dearest Miss Beverley, it is no want of respect, but I am so very glad to see you it makes me quite forget myself!"

Cecilia, charmed at a reception so ingenuously affectionate, soon satisfied her doubting diffidence by the warmest thanks that she had preserved so much regard for her, and by doubling the kindness with which she returned her caresses.

"Mercy on me, madam," cried Mrs Belfield, who during this time had been busily employed in sweeping the hearth, wiping some flops upon the table, and smoothing her handkerchief and apron, "why the girl's enough to smother you. Henny, how can you be so troublesome? I never saw you behave in this way before."

"Miss Beverley, madam," said Henrietta, again retreating, "is so kind as to pardon me, and I was so much surprised at seeing her, that I hardly knew what I was about."

"The young ladies, ma'am," said Mr Hobson, "have a mighty way of saluting one another

another till such time as they get husbands: and then I'll warrant you they can meet without any salutation at all. That's my remark, at least, and what I've seen of the world has set me upon making it."

This speech led Cecilia to check, however artless, the tenderness of her fervent young friend, whom she was much teized by meeting in such company, but who seemed not to dare understand the frequent looks which she gave her expressive of a wish to be alone with her.

"Come, ladies," continued the facetious Mr Hobson, "what if we were all to sit down and have a good dish of tea? and suppose, Mrs Belfield, you was to order us a fresh round of toast and butter? do you think the young ladies here would have any objection? and what if we were to have a little more water in the tea-kettle? not forgetting a little more tea in the tea-pot. What I say is this, let us all be comfortable; that's my notion of things."

"And a very good notion too," said Mrs Belfield, "for you have nothing to vex you. Ah, ma'am, you have heard, I suppose, about my son? gone off! nobody knows where!—left that lord's house where he might have lived like a king, and gone out into the wide world nobody knows for what!"

"Indeed?" said Cecilia, who, from seeing him in London, concluded he was again

with his family, "and has he not acquainted you where he is?"

"No, ma'am, no," cried Mrs Belfield, "he's never once told me where he is gone, nor let me know the least about the matter, for if I did I would not taste a dish of tea again for a twelvemonth till I saw him get back again to that lord's! and I believe in my heart there's never such another in the three kingdoms, for he has sent here after him I dare say a score of times. And no wonder, for I will take upon me to say he won't find his fellow in a hurry, Lord as he is."

"As to his being a Lord," said Mr Hobson, "I am one of them that lay no great stress upon that, unless he has got a good long purse of his own, and then, to be sure, a Lord's no bad thing. But as to the matter of saying Lord such a one, how d'ye do? and Lord such a one, what do you want? and such sort of compliments, why in my mind, it's a mere nothing, in comparison of a good income. As to your son, ma'am, he did not go the right way to work. He should have begun with business, and gone into pleasure afterwards: and if he had but done that, I'll be bold to say we might have had him at this very minute drinking tea with us over this fire-side."

"My son, Sir," said Mrs Belfield, rather angrily, "was another sort of a person than a person

person of business ; he always despised it from a child, and come of it what may, I am sure he was born to be a gentleman."

" As to his despising business," said Mr Hobson, very contemptuously, " why so much the worse, for business is no such despiseable thing. And if he had been brought up behind a counter, instead of dangling after these same Lords, why he might have had a house of his own over his head, and been as good a man as myself."

" A house over his head?" said Mrs Belfield, " why he might have had what he would, and have done what he would, if he had but followed my advice, and put himself a little forward. I have told him a hundred times to ask some of those great people he lived amongst for a place at court, for I know they've so many they hardly know what to do with them, and it was always my design from the beginning that he should be something of a great man ; but I never could persuade him tho' for any thing I know, as I have often told him, if he had but had a little courage he might have been an Ambassador by this time. And now, all of a sudden, to be gone nobody knows where!" —

" I am sorry, indeed," said Cecilia, who knew not whether most to pity or wonder at her blind folly ; " but I doubt not you will hear of him soon."

" As to being an Ambassador, ma'am," said Mr Hobson, " it's talking quite out of character. Those sort of great people keep things of that kind for their own poor relations and cousins. What I say is this; a man's best way is to take care of himself. The more those great people see you want them, the less they like your company. Let every man be brought up to business, and then when he's made his fortune, he may walk with his hat on. Why now there was your friend, ma'am," turning to Cecilia, " that shot out his brains without paying any body a soufe; pray how was that being more genteel than standing behind a counter, and not owing a shilling?"

" Do you think a young lady," cried Mrs Belfield warmly, " can bear to hear of such a thing as standing behind a counter? I am sure if my son had ever done it, I should not expect any lady would so much as look at him. And yet, though I say it, she might look a good while, and not see many such persons, let her look where she pleased. And then he has such a winning manner into the bargain, that I believe in my heart there's never a lady in the land could say no to him. And yet he has such a prodigious shyness, I never could make him own he had so much as asked the question. And what lady can begin first?"

" Why no," said Mr Hobson, " that would be out of character another way. Now my notion is this; let every man be agreeable! and

and then he may ask what lady he pleases—
And when he's a mind of a lady, he should look upon a frown or two as nothing; for the ladies frown in courtship as a thing of course; it's just like a man's swearing at a coachman; why he's not a bit more in a passion, only he thinks he sha'n't be minded without it."

" Well, for my part," said Mrs Belfield, " I am sure if I was a young lady, and most especially if I was a young lady of fortune, and all that, I should like a modest young gentleman, such as my son, for example, better by half than a bold swearing young fellow, that would make a point to have me whether I would or no."

" Ha! ha! ha!" cried Mr Hobson; " but the young ladies are not of that way of thinking; they are all for a little life and spirit. Don't I say right, young ladies?"

Cecilia, who could not but perceive that these speeches were levelled at herself, felt offended and tired; and finding she had no chance of any private conversation with Henrietta, arose to take leave: but while she stopped her in the passage to enquire when she could see her alone, a footman knocked at the door, who, having asked if Mr Belfield lodged there, and been answered in the affirmative, begged to know whether Miss Beverley was then in the house?

Cecilia, much surprised, went forward, and told him who she was.

"I have been, madam," said he, "with a message to you at Mr Monckton's, in Soho-Square: but nobody knew where you was; and Mr Monckton came out and spoke to me himself, and said that all he could suppose was that you might be at this house. So he directed me to come here."

"And from whom, Sir, is your message?"

"From the honourable Mr Delvile, madam, in St James's-Square. He desires to know if you shall be at home on Saturday morning, the day after to-morrow, and whether you can appoint Mr Briggs to meet him by twelve o'clock exactly, as he sha'n't be able to stay above three minutes."

Cecilia gave an answer as cold as the message; that she would be in Soho-Square at the time he mentioned, and acquaint Mr Briggs of his intention.

The footman then went away; and Henrietta told her, that if she could call some morning she might perhaps contrive to be alone with her, and added, "indeed I wish much to see you, if you could possibly do me so great an honour; for I am very miserable, and have nobody to tell so! Ah, Miss Beverley! you that have so many friends, and that deserve as many again, you little know what a hard thing it is to have none!—but my brother's strange disappearing has half broke our hearts!"

Cecilia

Cecilia was beginning a consolatory speech, in which she meant to give her private assurances of his health and safety, when she was interrupted by Mr Albany, who came suddenly into the passage.

Henrietta received him with a look of pleasure, and enquired why he had so long been absent; but, surprised by the sight of Cecilia, he exclaimed, without answering her, "why didst thou fail me? why appoint me to a place thou wert quitting thyself?—thou thing of fair professions! thou inveigler of esteem! thou vain, delusive promiser of pleasure!"

" You condemn me too hastily," said Cecilia ; " if I failed in my promise, it was not owing to caprice or insincerity, but to a real and bitter misfortune which incapacitated me from keeping it. I shall soon, however,—nay, I am already at your disposal, if you have any commands for me."

" I have always," answered he, " commands for the rich, for I have always compassion for the poor."

" Come to me, then, at Mr Monckton's in Soho-Square," cried she, and hastened into her chair, impatient to end a conference which she saw excited the wonder of the servants, and which also now drew out from the parlour Mr Hobson and Mrs Belfield. She then kissed her hand to Henrietta, and ordered the chairman to carry her home.

It had not been without difficulty that she had restrained herself from mentioning what she knew of Belfield, when she found his mother and sister in a state of such painful uncertainty concerning him. But her utter ignorance of his plans, joined to her undoubted knowledge of his wish of concealment, made her fear doing mischief by officiousness, and think it wiser not to betray what she had seen of him, till better informed of his own views and intentions. Yet, willing to shorten a suspense so uneasy to them, she determined to entreat Mr Monckton would endeavour to find him out, and acquaint him with their anxiety.

That gentleman, when she returned to his house, was in a state of mind by no means enviable. Missing her at tea, he had asked Miss Bennet where she was, and hearing she had not left word, he could scarce conceal his chagrin. Knowing, however, how few were her acquaintances in town, he soon concluded she was with Miss Belfield, but, not satisfied with sending Mr Delvile's messenger after her, he privately employed one in whom he trusted for himself, to make enquiries at the house without saying whence he came.

But though this man was returned, and he knew her safety, he still felt alarmed; he had flattered himself, from the length of time

time in which she had now done nothing without consulting him, she would scarce even think of any action without his previous concurrence. And he had hoped, by a little longer use, to make his counsel become necessary, which he knew to be a very short step from rendering it absolute.

Nor was he well pleased to perceive, by this voluntary excursion, a struggle to cast off her sadness, and a wish to procure herself entertainment: it was not that he desired her misery, but he was earnest that all relief from it should spring from himself: and though far from displeased that Delvile should lose his sovereignty over her thoughts, he was yet of opinion that, till his own liberty was restored, he had less to apprehend from grief indulged, than grief allayed; one could but lead her to repining retirement, the other might guide her to a consolatory rival.

He well knew, however, it was as essential to his cause to disguise his disappointments as his expectations, and, certain that by pleasing alone he had any chance of acquiring power, he cleared up when Cecilia returned, who as unconscious of feeling, as of owing any subjection to him, preserved uncontrolled the right of acting for himself, however desirous and glad of occasional instruction.

She told him where she had been, and related her meeting Belfield, and the unhappiness of his friends, and hinted her wish that he could be informed what they suffered. Mr Monckton, eager to oblige her, went instantly in search of him, and returning to supper, told her he had traced him through the bookseller, who had not the dexterity to parry his artful enquiries, and had actually appointed him to breakfast in Soho-Square the next morning.

He had found him, he said, writing, but in high spirits and good humour. He had resisted, for a while, his invitation on account of his dress, all his cloaths but the very coat which he had on being packed up and at his mother's: but, when laughed at by Mr Monckton for still retaining some foppery, he gaily protested what remained of it should be extinguished; and acknowledging that his shame was no part of his philosophy, declared he would throw it wholly aside, and in spight of his degradation, renew his visits at his house.

"I would not tell him," Mr Monckton, continued, "of the anxiety of his family; I thought it would come more powerfully from yourself, who, having seen, can better enforce it."

Cecilia was very thankful for this compliance with her request, and anticipated the pleasure she hoped soon to give Henrietta,

by

by the restoration of a brother so much loved and so regretted.

She sent, mean time, to Mr Briggs the message she had received from Mr Delvile, and had the satisfaction of an answer that he would observe the appointment.

C H A P. IX.

A CONFABULATION.

THE next morning, while the family were at breakfast, Belfield, according to his promise, made his visit.

A high colour overspread his face as he entered the room, resulting from a sensation of grief at his fallen fortune, and shame at his altered appearance, which though he endeavoured to cover under an air of gaiety and unconcern, gave an awkwardness to his manners, and a visible distress to his countenance : Mr Monckton received him with pleasure, and Cecilia, who saw the conflict of his philosophy with his pride, dressed her features once more in smiles, which, however faint and heartless, shewed her desire to re-assure him. Miss Bennet, as usual when not called upon by the master

or

or Lady of the house, sat as a cypher ; and Lady Margaret, always disagreeable and repulsive to the friends of her husband, though she was not now more than commonly ungracious, struck the quick-feeling and irritable Belfield, to wear an air of rude superiority meant to reproach him with his disgrace.

This notion, which strongly affected him, made him, for one instant, hesitate whether he should remain another in the same room with her : but the friendliness of Mr Monckton, and the gentleness and good breeding of Cecilia, seemed so studious to make amends for her moroseness, that he checked his too ready indignation, and took his seat at the table. Yet was it some time before he could recover even the assumed vivacity which this suspected insult had robbed him of, sufficiently to enter into conversation with any appearance of ease or pleasure. But, after a while, foothed by the attentions of Cecilia and Mr Monckton, his uneasiness wore off, and the native spirit and liveliness of his character broke forth with their accustomed energy.

" This good company, I hope," said he, addressing himself, however, only to Cecilia, " will not so much *mistake the thing* as to criticise my dress of this morning ; since it is perfectly according to rule, and to rule established from time immemorial :

but

but lest any of you should so much err as to fancy shabby what is only characteristic, I must endeavour to be beforehand with the malice of conjecture, and have the honour to inform you, that I am enlisted in the Grub-street regiment, of the third storey and under the tattered banner of scribbling volunteers! a race which, if it boasts not the courage of heroes, at least equals them in enmity. This coat, therefore, is merely the uniform of my corps, and you will all, I hope, respect it as emblematical of wit and erudition."

"We must at least respect you," said Cecilia, "who thus gaily can sport with it."

"Ah, Madam!" said he, more seriously, "it is not from you I ought to look for respect! I must appear to you the most unsteady and coward-hearted of beings. But lately I blushed to see you from poverty, though more worthily employed than when I had been seen by you in affluence; that shame vanquished, another equally narrow took its place, and yesterday I blushed again that you detected me in a new pursuit, though I had only quitted my former one from a conviction it was ill chosen. There seems in human nature a worthlessness not to be conquered! yet I will struggle with it to the last, and either die in the attempt, or dare seem that which I am, without adding to the miseries of life,
the

the sting, the envenomed sting, of dastardly false shame!"

"Your language is wonderfully altered within this twelvemonth," said Mr Monckton; "the *worthlessness of human nature!* the *miseries of life!* this from you! so lately the champion of human nature, and the panegyrist of human life!"

"Soured by personal disappointment," answered he, "I may perhaps speak with too much acrimony; yet, ultimately, my opinions have not much changed. Happiness is given to us with more liberality than we are willing to confess; it is judgment only that is dealt us sparingly, and of that we have so little, that when felicity is before us, we turn to the right or left, or when at the right or left, we proceed strait forward. It has been so with me; I have sought it at a distance, amidst difficulty and danger, when all that I could wish has been immediately within my grasp."

"It must be owned," said Mr Monckton, "after what you have suffered from this world you were wont to defend, there is little reason to wonder at some change in your opinion."

"Yet whatever have been my sufferings," he answered, "I have generally been involved in them by my own rashness or caprice. My last enterprise especially, from which my expectations were highest, was the most ill judged of any. I considered not how little my way

way of life had fitted me for the experiment I was making, how irreparably I was enervated by long sedentary habits, and how insufficient for bodily strength was mental resolution. We may fight against partial prejudices, and by spirit and fortitude we may overcome them; but it will not do to war with the general tenor of education. We may blame, despise, regret as we please, but customs long established, and habits long indulged, assume an empire despotic, though their power is but prescriptive. Opposing them is vain; Nature herself, when forced aside, is not more elastic in her rebound."

" Will you not then," said Cecilia, " since your experiment has failed, return again to your family, and to the plan of life you formerly settled?"

" You speak of them together," said he, with a smile, " as if you thought them inseparable; and indeed my own apprehension they would be deemed so, has made me thus fear to see my friends, since I love not resistance, yet cannot again attempt the plan of life they would have me pursue. I have given up my cottage, but my independence is as dear to me as ever; and all that I have gathered from experience, is to maintain it by those employments for which my education has fitted me, instead of seeking it injudiciously by the very road for which it has unqualified me."

" And

" And what is this independence," cried Mr Monckton, " which has thus bewitched your imagination ? a mere idle dream of romance and enthusiasm ; without existence in nature, without possibility in life. In uncivilised countries, or in lawless times, independence, for a while, may perhaps stalk abroad : but in a regular government, 'tis only the vision of a heated brain ; one part of a community must inevitably hang upon another, and 'tis a farce to call either independent, when to break the chain by which they are linked would prove destruction to both. The soldier wants not the officer more than the officer the soldier ; nor the tenant the landlord, more than the landlord the tenant. The rich owe their distinction, their luxuries, to the poor, as much as the poor owe their rewards, their necessaries, to the rich."

" Man treated as an automaton," answered Belfield, " and considered merely with respect to his bodily operations, may indeed be called dependent, since the food by which he lives, or, rather, without which he dies, cannot wholly be cultivated and prepared by his own hands : but considered in a nobler sense, he deserves not the degrading epithet; speak of him, then, as a being of feeling and understanding, with pride to alarm, with nerves to tremble, with honour to satisfy, and with a soul to be immortal !—as such, may he not claim the freedom of his own thoughts? may not

not that claim be extended to the liberty of speaking, and the power of being governed by them? and when thoughts, words, and actions are exempt from control, will you brand him with dependency merely because the grazier feeds his meat, and the baker kneads his bread?"

" But who is there in the whole world," said Mr Monckton, " extensive as it is, and dissimilar as are its inhabitants, that can pretend to assert, his thoughts, words, and actions are exempt from control? even where interest, which you so much disdain, interferes not,—though where that is I confess I cannot tell!—are we not kept silent where we wish to reprove by the fear of offending? and made speak wherewish to be silent by the desire of obliging? do we not bow to the scoundrel as low as to the man of honour? are we not by mere reforms kept standing when tired? made give place to those we despise? and smiles to those we hate? or if we refuse these attentions, are we not regarded as savages, and shut out of society?"

" All these," answered Belfield, " are so merely matters of ceremony, that the concession can neither cost pain to the proud, nor give pleasure to the vain. The bow is to the coat, the attention is to the rank, and the fear of offending ought to extend to all mankind. Homage such as this infringes not our sincerity, since it is as much a matter of course

as

as the drefs that we wear, and has as little reason to flatter a man as the shadow which follows him. I no more, therefore, hold him deceitful for not opposing this pantomimical parade, than I hold him to be dependent for eating corn he has not sown."

"Where, then, do you draw the line? and what is the boundary beyond which your independence must not step?"

"I hold that man," cried he, with energy, "to be independent, who treats the Great as the Little, and the Little as the Great, who neither exults in riches nor blushes in poverty, who owes no man a groat, and who spends not a shilling he has not earned."

"You will not, indeed, then, have a very numerous acquaintance, if this is the description of those with whom you purpose to associate! but is it possible you imagine you can live by such notions? why the Carthusian in his monastery, who is at least removed from temptation, is not mortified so severely as a man of spirit living in the world, who would prescribe himself such rules."

"Not merely have I prescribed," returned Belfield, "I have already put them in practice; and far from finding any penance, I never before found happiness. I have now adopted, though poor, the very plan of life I should have elected if rich; my pleasure, therefore, is become my business. and my business my pleasure."

"And

"And is this plan," cried Monckton, "nothing more than turning knight-errant to the booksellers?"

"'Tis a knight-errantry," answered Belfield laughing, "which, however ludicrous it may seem to you, requires more foul and more brains than any other. Our giants may, indeed, be only wind-mills, but they must be attacked with as much spirit, and conquered with as much bravery, as any fort or any town, in time of war should be demolished; and though the siege, I must confess, may be of less national utility, the assailants of the quill have their honour as much at heart as the assailants of the sword."

"I suppose, then," said Monckton, archly, "if a man wants a biting lampoon, or an handsome panegyric, some news-paper scandal, or a sonnet for a lady—"

"No, no," interrupted Belfield eagerly, "if you imagine me a hivelingscribbler for the purposes of defamation or of flattery, you as little know my situation as my character. My subjects shall be my own, and my satire shall be general. I would as much disdain to be personal with an anonymous pen, as to attack an unarmed man in the dark with a dagger I had kept concealed."

A reply of rallying incredulity was rising to the lips of Mr Monckton, when reading in the looks of Cecilia an entire approbation of this sentiment, he checked his desire of ridicule,

dicule, and exclaimed, “spoken like a man of honour, and one whose works may profit the world!”

“From my earliest youth to the present hour,” continued Belfield, “literature has been the favourite object of my pursuit, my recreation in leisure, and my hope in employment. My propensity to it, indeed, has been so ungovernable, that I may properly call it the source of my several miscarriages throughout life. It was the bar to my preferment, for it gave me a distaste to other studies; it was the cause of my unsteadiness in all my undertakings, because to all I preferred it. It has sunk me to distress, it has involved me in difficulties; it has brought me to the brink of ruin by making me neglect the means of living, yet never, till now, did I discern it might itself be my support.”

“I am heartily glad, Sir,” said Cecilia, “your various enterprizes and struggles have at length ended in a project which promises you so much satisfaction. But you will surely suffer your sister and your mother to partake of it? for who is there that your prosperity will make so happy?”

“You do them infinite honour, madam, by taking any interest in their affairs; but to own to you the truth, what to me appears prosperity, will to them wear another aspect. They have looked forward to my elevation with expectations the most improbable, and thought

thought every thing within my grasp, with a simplicity incredible. But though their hopes were absurd, I am pained by their disappointment, and I have not courage to meet their tears, which I am sure will not be spared when they see me."

" 'Tis from tenderness, then," said Cecilia, half smiling, " that you are cruel ; and from affection to your friends that you make them believe you have forgotten them ?"

There was a delicacy in this reproach exactly suited to work upon Belfield, who feeling it with quickness, started up, and cried, " I believe I am wrong !—I will go to them this moment !"

Cecilia felt eager to second the generous impulse ; but Mr Monckton, laughing at his impetuosity, insisted he should first finish his breakfast.

" Your friends," said Cecilia, " can have no mortification so hard to bear as your voluntary absence; and if they see but that you are happy, they will soon be reconciled to whatever situation you may chuse."

" Happy!" repeated he, with animation, " O, I am in paradise !" I am come from a region in the first rude state of nature, to civilization and refinement! the life I led at the cottage was the life of a savage ; no intercourse with society, no consolation from books ; my mind locked up, every source dried of intellectual delight, and no enjoyment

ment in my power but from sleep and from food. Weary of an existence which thus levelled me with a brute, I grew ashamed of the approximation, and listening to the remonstrance of my understanding, I gave up the precipitate plan, to pursue one more consonant to reason. I came to town, hired a room, and sent for pen, ink and paper: what I have written are trifles, but the bookseller has not rejected them. I was settled, therefore, in a moment, and comparing my new occupation with that I had just quitted, I seemed exalted on the sudden from a mere creature of instinct, to a rational and intelligent being. But when I first opened a book, after so long an abstinence from all mental nourishment,—O, it was rapture ! no half-famished beggar regaled suddenly with food ever seized on his repast with more hungry avidity."

" Let fortune turn which way it will," cried Monckton, " you may defy all its malice, while possessed of a spirit of enjoyment which nothing can subdue!"

" But were you not, Sir," said Cecilia, " as great an enthusiast the other day for your cottage, and for labour ?"

" I was, madam; but there my philosophy was erroneous: in my ardour to fly from meanness and from dependence, I thought in labour and retirement I should find freedom and happiness; but I forgot that my body
was

was not seasoned for such work, and considered not that a mind which had once been opened by knowledge, could ill endure the contraction of dark and perpetual ignorance. The approach, however, of winter, brought me acquainted with my mistake. It grew cold, it grew bleak; little guarded against the inclemency of the weather, I felt its severity in every limb, and missed a thousand indulgencies which in possession I had never valued. To rise at break of day, chill, freezing, and comfortless! no sun abroad, no fire at home! to go out in all weather to work, that work rough, coarse, and laborious!—unused to such hardships, I found I could not bear them, and, however unwillingly, was compelled to relinquish the attempt."

Breakfast now being over, he again arose to take leave.

" You are going, then, Sir," said Cecilia, " immediately to your friends?"

" No, madam," answered he hesitating, " not just this moment; to-morrow morning perhaps,—but it is now late, and I have business for the rest of the day."

" Ah, Mr Monckton!" cried Cecilia, what mischief have you done by occasioning this delay!"

" This goodness, madam," said Belfield, " my sister can never sufficiently acknowledge. But I will own, that though, just now, in a

warm moment, I felt eager to present myself to her and my mother, I rather wish, now I am cooler, to be saved the pain of telling them in person my situation. I mean, therefore, first to write to them."

" You will not fail, then, to see them to-morrow?"

" Certainly—I think not."

" Nay, but certainly you *must* not, for I shall call upon them to-day, and assure them they may expect you. Can I soften your task of writing by giving them any message from you?"

" Ah, madam, have a care!" cried he; " this condescension to a poor author may be more dangerous than you have any suspicion! and before you have power to help yourself, you may see your name prefixed to the dedication of some trumpery pamphlet!"

" I will run," cried she, " all risks; remember, therefore, you will be responsible for the performance of my promise."

" I will be sure," answered he, " not to forget what reflects so much honour upon myself."

Cecilia was satisfied by this assent, and he then went away.

" A strange flighty character!" cried Mr Monckton, " yet of uncommon capacity, and full of genius. Were he less imaginative, wild and eccentric, he has abilities for any station,

station, and might fix and distinguish himself almost wherever he pleased."

"I knew not," said Cecilia, "the full worth of steadiness and prudence till I knew this young man; for he has everything else; talents the most striking, a love of virtue the most elevated, and manners the most pleasing; yet wanting steadiness and prudence, he can neither act with consistency nor prosper with continuance."

"He is well enough," said Lady Margaret, who had heard the whole argument in ful-
len taciturnity, "he is well enough, I say;
and there comes no good from young wo-
men's being so difficult."

Cecilia, offended by a speech which implied a rude desire to dispose of her, went up stairs to her own room; and Mr Monckton, always enraged when young men and Cecilia were alluded to in the same sentence, retir-
ed to his library.

She then ordered a chair, and went to Port-
land-street, to fulfil what she had offered to
Belfield, and to revive his mother and sister
by the pleasure of the promised interview.

She found them together: and her intelli-
gence being of equal consequence to both, she
did not now repine at the presence of Mrs
Belfield. She made her communication with
the most cautious attention to their characters,
softening the ill she had to relate with respect

to Belfield's present way of living, by endeavouring to awaken affection and joy from the prospect of the approaching meeting. She counselled them as much as possible to restrain their chagrin at his misfortunes, which he would but construe into reproach of his ill management; and she represented that when once he was restored to his family, he might almost imperceptibly be led into some less wild and more profitable way of business.

When she had told all she thought proper to relate, kindly interspersing her account with the best advice and best comfort she could suggest, she made an end of her visit; for the affliction of Mrs Belfield, upon hearing the actual situation of her son, was so clamourous and unappeasable, that, little wondering at Belfield's want of courage to encounter it, and having no opportunity in such a storm to console the soft Henrietta, whose tears flowed abundantly that her brother should thus be fallen, she only promised before she left town to see her again, and beseeching Mrs Belfield to moderate her concern, was glad to leave the house where her presence had no power to quiet their distress.

She passed the rest of the day in sad reflections upon the meeting she was to have the next morning with Mr Delvile. She wished ardently to know whether his son was gone abroad; and whether Mrs Delvile, whose

: health

health in her own letter was mentioned in terms the most melancholy, was yet recovered; yet neither of these enquiries could she even think of making, since reasonably, without them, apprehensive of some reproach.

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.

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